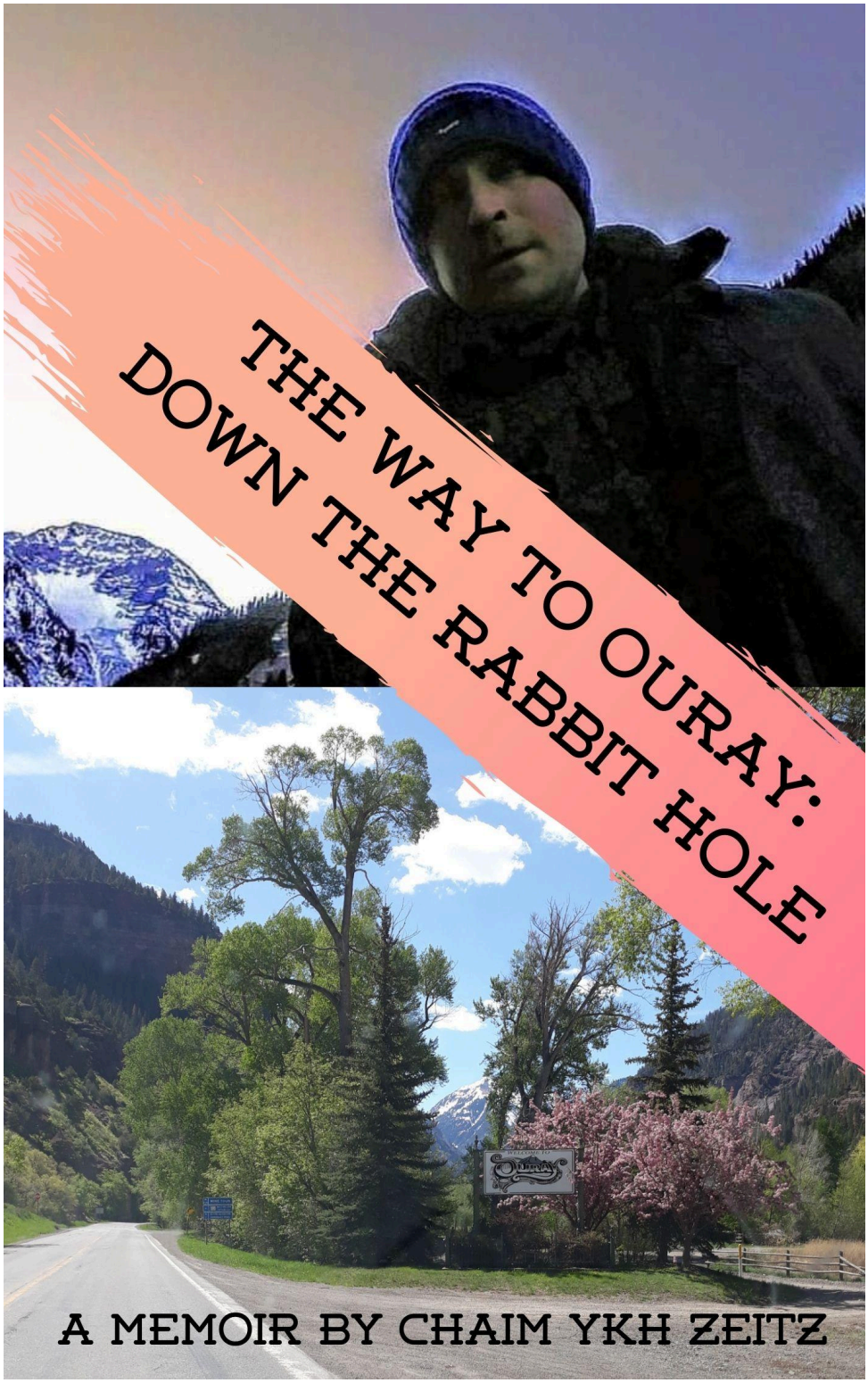
THE WAY TO OURAY:
DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE
A MEMOIR BY CHAIM YKH ZEITZ

# Index:

Prologue
Chapter 1: ENTER THE RABBIT HOLE
Chapter 2: LOOK! IT'S A SHARK! NO, IT'S A DOLPHIN! NO, IT'S SUPERMAN!
Chapter 3: WHAT IS LOVE?
Chapter 4: THE UNDERDOG
Chapter 5: THE SUPERMAN
Chapter 6: WHO (OR WHAT) IS GOD ANYWAYS?
Chapter 7: THE LABYRINTH AND THE HEART SHAPED ROCK
Chapter 8: FACING FEAR
Chapter 9: THE POWER OF UNCERTAINTY
Chapter 10: EXIT THE RABBIT HOLE
Chapter 11: THE WAY BACK TO OURAY: DOWN A NEW RABBIT HOLE

# Prologue:

I love climbing mountains because the higher you go, the more you see below. It is like life. Everything has its peaks and its valleys. My story is full of them, and it will require you, the reader, to do a little bit of climbing to see the bigger picture.

So come. Let's climb together.

Each cycle of my life is intertwined with one another, almost like a spiral. Each trip to Ouray and the time between, I found myself in the present, past, and future. My time in Ouray allowed me to look at myself in the most genuine way possible, with all the filters down.

There laid bare my inner child. He needed proper guidance. Here in Ouray, I could provide it to him in the most perfect way because I know him better than anybody else does. Because I am him.

He was always there throughout my growth into and through adulthood. From my movie projectionist days to the hard choices I had to make to become a paramedic. He was there through the hard decisions I had to make during those years, getting married later in life, getting a divorce, and my trips to Ouray.

The timeline of this story is dependent on the history that brought it to where it is written. To understand it, the past is required to draw out the context from which it lays. The groundwork for the man I have become is based on the traumatic events that my inner child needed attention for. I was able to give him that time in Ouray. I faced my fears there, the trepidations my inner child had held onto for so long, and I became a better man.

The rabbit hole that this story is sliding down is the journey I took inward when I was at my worst. I was fat, unhappy, and in a marriage eating away at what makes me who I am. Just after entering this particular rabbit hole in December of 2017, you wouldn't have been able to tell I was in mental anguish because while I was planning my trip to Ouray, I kept my focus on work, exercise, eating healthy, and not drinking. I knew alcohol would not be a good mix during a divorce.

The divorce was tearing me apart emotionally. I hid it pretty well, however. I kind of had to hide it. All the times I opened up about what was on my mind, my ex-wife would use it against me. This was my last chance to be able to successfully stand up for myself. It would define my life after her.

And through patience and diligence, I took back control of my life. Climbing the mountains of Ouray helped me overcome my fears during this challenging time in my life. I believe it is time to share my experience now with the world. This is a story for anyone who feels like their life is a mountainous challenge and who wants to be able to climb it and conquer it.

My story can help give some comfort in knowing you are not alone in this endeavor. I have a unique history, but you will experience a unique sense of connection to it. This is a true story about how I survived life this far and what I have learned about the nature of people, God, and the Universe.

# Chapter 1: ENTER THE RABBIT HOLE

**May 2018:**
It is one in the morning on the icy roads of the Rocky Mountains. Forty-three hours of absolutely no sleep when the most mighty snowstorm I have ever seen hits down. I can't see shit on the road, but luckily, there is a gas station to the right of me that screams salvation.

I pull in and park. I was hoping for it to clear up soon. Wishful thinking. I grab some snacks from inside, take a nice dump, and then come back outside to find my rental car turned into a hill of snow. I'm stuck here. I know it. For how long? I guess I could catch some z's. I must have fallen asleep for almost an hour because it looks like the snow has slowed down.

Nice. Finally.

I get out of the passenger's seat and into the driver's seat. I attempt to start my car but instead get a message on the dashboard stating it's too cold outside for it to turn on.

Great. Just great.

I'm calm.

Two hours later. Different story. I'm about to break down, but my higher brain is still in control of my reptilian brain. Still calm. But for how much longer?

One last time. Click click click, start? Fuck yes! Now just go in reverse…. Wait, what's going on? The car is stuck in park. I'm struggling. Struggling for at least another good ten minutes. Shutting the car off. Restarting it until, for whatever reason, I can put it in reverse. Hmm. I'm putting the pedal to the metal, but I'm not moving. Shut the car off. Restart. Nothing. Restart. Nothing. Restart four more times.

Kaboom.

Reverse. Nothing. I step out of the driverside door only to see that the mother fuckin' tires are frozen to the ground.

God damn it.

It's now almost four in the morning. The snow pusher tells me the sun will come up in a couple of hours, and the ice should melt off by then. Waiting. Restarting. Waiting. Restarting. Reverse? Nope. Reverse? Nope again. Shut down. Wait. Restart. Nothing.

Same bitch ass message. Too cold outside for the car to start.

Am I ready for that mental breakdown? No. I can do this. This is my test.

I wish she could see how far I have come. I wish she could see the man I'm striving to become. She would want me back if she only saw how much I've grown.

But she won't. I have to move on.

I restart the car. Nothing. I attempt to restart it again. Nothing happens again. Five times later. Am I ready for that mental breakdown? Yes. The sun creeps itself all over my frozen hands. It feels good. My face starts to feel it too. But that's unimportant. Restart. Nothing. Restart. Restart. Restart.

Dial Dad.

He picks up. "Good morning, sir! Are you in Colorado yet?" I replied, "Dad, I'm about to have a mental breakdown," I stated calmly, knowing my following words would express a 180 on that calmness. He tries to give me some suggestions as I'm still trying to restart the car like a mad man. "You know, you could always head back now, take a little loss, and come with us this summer to -" K-k-k-k-k-k-KABOOM!

I then shift to reverse, and what do you know? The ice melted off the tires! I start to back up.

"HAHAHAHAHAHAHA! Dad, it started! I'm on my way to Ouray!"

Something was calling me there. The same thing has called me throughout essential choices in my life. Retrospectively, I look back and see it may have been the older version of myself. Or maybe it was the higher dimensional forms of myself. I don't know, but a little bit more is revealed to me every day as to who or what it is that has been calling me. What do they or it want? All I know is it is a silent message. It says so much, but not a word has ever come out. For as far back as I can remember, I have always followed it down whatever entrance to that part of my life's rabbit hole.

One of my earliest memories of following the calling was when I was five years old. I had two black and blue eyes that my mother gave me with a metal bucket. She did so because I hit my brother's foot for interrupting the toy piano concert I was in the middle of performing for her. It all went down so quickly. I remember where I was when she did it. I was hiding in the dark kitchen. She walked in and stood in a threatening position, then hit me with the metal bucket.

The following morning, my sister Raizel and I waited for the school bus. We were facing the grassy field. The sun was visible from our left peripheral vision.

She knew.

She knew what had happened. And she knew what to say. Don't tell the teachers because then they'll tell the cops.

She was only nine years old. She knew what would happen, and she needed assurance that I wouldn't rat out my mother. So I gave her that assurance. But it was too obvious. I didn't have to say anything for the cops to arrive. I did listen to my sister and lie to the teacher, but the coppers still showed up at my school. I even lied to them as well initially.

We would have stayed together. We would have probably grown up to become like our parents. Religious, angry, and doing shady things. But something inside of me was pushing me to tell the truth. Something had me switch my answer.

Later that night, several cops showed up. They took Polaroid pictures of my face while the other cops questioned my parents separately. I could see the expression on my mother Linda's face wasn't anger but sadness.

When they took us outside, I could see my father, Rocky, arguing with the other cops. Was he in handcuffs again? I couldn't tell.

They took us to stay at Linda's parents' condo in Century Village. That was a fun six months. Besides watching Hurricane Andrew tear up and destroy things outside the window, my parents were going through a divorce. And to top it off, for whatever reason, the government allowed Linda to stay with us. I didn't complain, and I'm not complaining now, but thinking about it as I write this, yeah, that's weird.

As time drew forward, Rocky was trying to get back with her. He came by once, and we all met up at the pool area where not too long before I jumped into the deep end, almost drowning until my sister Raizel saved me (which led me to teach myself how to swim). We hadn't seen him in months, and after this failed attempt at a redo, I wouldn't see him again until I was twenty-one years old. At least not interacting with him until then.

Technically, I saw him again a few years later when I was being fostered by other people who sent me to summer camp. He was standing at a payphone at the entrance to the main building at Camp Simcha, looking involved in a conversation, but there was no interaction between us. I walked by unnoticed. Or maybe he did notice me, and he was pretending not to.

Would my siblings and I be where we are today if I never told the cops the truth? What if I stuck with my story?

That is the focus of this book. Whatever pushed me to tell the truth, despite knowing something "bad" would happen, has led me to the conditions that would eventually lead me to Ouray. It was here that the answer manifested itself into form for me.

The decision to risk my life driving through the stormy Rocky Mountains to visit Ouray was the same reason I decided to tell the men in blue the truth.

A feeling.

As if someone or something was calling me, I would listen and go in that direction. I never thought I would just get up and go to a place no one had ever heard of. But I did. I trusted that feeling inside of me again and went on my way down the rabbit hole to a little hidden place called Ouray. A place where the mountains kiss the sky. This is where it all began. The location that I chose to challenge myself to reach the higher peaks of myself.

December 2017 was my first visit. My divorce was scheduled a month from then. I never expected it to be as challenging as it got, but like the times before this one where the challenges came to me, it made me stronger and better.

I recall the first mountain trail that I hiked in Ouray. I needed to urinate, so I decided to attempt to cross a frozen waterfall. I ended up losing my foot grip and sliding down it. It sure hurt, but I found myself in the bloody process. It made me feel alive.

I cleaned myself up and got off as many of the big plant prick balls attached to my entire lower body on the way down. I used to have someone who would have patched me up after a situation like this, but now all I have is myself. While learning to do things myself again, I realized that I was not alone. That the world does produce kind-hearted individuals.

I saw a bunch of Foresters on ATVs pass by. They stopped to help me out. One of them even offered to drive me back to my car since it was about to get dark out, and the trail I came from was a pretty dangerous trail to walk on at night.

I was willing to walk the trail back, as I was even willing to face mountain bears at that point in my life, but something again was pulling me to ride along with him. He came to Ouray for very similar reasons, but he stayed there.

The drive from Denver through the Rocky mountains to Ouray took about eight hours the first time and about 11 hours the second time around. There's nothing like it.

An eight-hour drive? There wasn't a closer airport?

There was. It was more expensive, less scenic of a route, and nowhere near as dangerous of a drive. I think I had a death wish the first time around. I look back now and realize I really could have died. From almost driving off the mountains several times by accident to sliding on ice at the time, I don't think I would have minded it so much. Writing this out now, yeah, not as much. Not as often.

I studied and mapped out my journey to Ouray a month before leaving for Colorado. I knew it wasn't going to be easy. I wanted it that way. The more complex the trip down the rabbit hole, the more appreciative I knew that I would be. And even though I didn't expect it to be as hard as it was, I found it to be a beautiful turmoil.

I chose to travel eight hours to Ouray from Denver. I could have gone anywhere else, but it felt right. Between Colorado legalizing Pot and the heavenly scenery of Ouray that I saw in the photos online, I concluded that it was the best place to reconnect myself to the universe for the price. Denver was where I knew I could buy Pot. My friend Art was there a month and a half earlier and let me know of some good dispensaries. So from Denver, I drove with Bob Dylan to set the mood. I set forth into the unknown. I went up and down the windy roads of the Rocky Mountains to get high and climb mountains.

The mountains varied in size, shape, and colors. I saw one mountain with two stripes of drastically different shades of brown running downward. I drove through tunnels of another. I went 100 MPH down a monster with no peddle to the metal needed. One minute I was in the summer lighting. The next, I was in a dark blizzard from hell. Five hours in, it felt like I had traveled to another world. Time seemed to have melted into itself.

Art was a sequenced factor in all of this. If it were not for him telling me about his upcoming trip to Denver, Colorado, I might not have had the calling to Ouray. A week after Heather and I separated, Art and I hung out, sharing a bowl of weed. As we were smoking it, he told me about a Marijuana convention in Denver. He was headed there for that. We both wanted to join the green rush ever since Pot became legal for recreational use in Colorado and Washington State.

After our business plan didn't pan out, I got a job in the medical field, and he continued to pursue it. I always regretted giving up the business we wanted to establish in Colorado. Since we called it quits, a part of me has always wanted to go to Colorado to smoke and enjoy the scenery. Marriage to a total anti-Marijuana conservadox Jewish princess prevented that from happening until divorce became inevitable.

So when Art planted the seed in my head that day, I decided to let it be the blooming into singlehood, and what better way to transition than with Acid. Created by a scientist named Albert Hoffmann, Acid chemically reduces your brain's filters. It makes you more conscious of the world around you. Information is flooded into your brain, and the fine line between imagination and reality becomes blurred.

My first time taking Acid was with Art. When my parents first met him, they loved him because he was so bright and had extensive knowledge about cars. My dad, my adopted dad, was obsessed with cars. It wasn't until I married Heather that my parents ended up hating Art like she vehemently did. I saw him differently than most people did. Sure, he was a bit crooked, but he knew that laws were meant to protect people's freedom. As long as you are not hurting someone else's freedom, why should your freedom be diminished just because others make it law? And that's why he and I became friends. He also understood that not everything is binary. So naturally, doing Acid with him was fun.

I knew Acid would bring the transformation I needed to face the next stage of my life. It became a tradition to take it every time I visited Ouray. Each time, a new lesson. However, for the second visit to Ouray, I held off until the second half of my trip to Boulder. But that was an exception. After that, up until my big move, I would do it in Ouray.

I usually went tripping with Art. I was unsure if I would have a bad trip or a good trip during my first visit to Ouray. I questioned whether the divorce may turn it into a bad trip. But the feeling was there. I trusted it. So I did it. It took almost an hour since I ingested the acid-infused Smarties candy when I started to feel it. I was starting to feel reality warp around me. It was dark out now. I could see the stars. Reality kept on bending, and the universe shifted out of focus.

It was as if the center of everything was exposing itself as no center, yet all being the center simultaneously. The trees began shifting their centers, revealing all the layers of their existence through the primary colors. It was getting more and more intense. The focal point of everything kept on shifting and exposing their centers of nothingness until I reached a higher plane of existence. It was on this plane that I found myself. I was a woman on this plane of existence. A woman with blonde hair and blue eyes. I felt like I knew her forever. I felt very safe with her. I couldn't make out her face, but I knew she was the most beautiful person I'd ever seen. I felt no separation between my existence and hers.

It was there that I finally understood what existence was. A paradox. We have free will, but we don't. It's the paradox that shifts everything into a clear focus. Without it, nothing would make sense. We understand happiness because sadness brings it into perspective. Sure, you can be happy without ever being sad. However, your level of satisfaction will never grow into what it's meant to grow into if you never experienced its contradiction. It's the reason for everything. For all animation. For all life.

It's the descent into chaos and nothingness that brings forth life. It's why we eat and why we die. To climb the black hole mountainous death spiral. Information breaks down into life, and life breaks down to climb what is left of existence, but we all eventually fall into the black hole of death. Where does it all go?

By the end of my 2017 trip to Ouray, I was ready to come back home and face reality. My divorce proceeding was a little over a month away, and I came back home with the strength I needed to face Heather. I had a plan. The necessary details were already worked out before my trip to Ouray. Now I just had to meet up with her. There were two divorces to face. The real one and the fairytale one. Both were scheduled for the same day.

She wasn't religious, yet she wanted to have an Orthodox Jewish wedding. She asked to keep a kosher home, even though she gave up on it. I was supportive, but I did let her know that the reality of maintaining a kosher home isn't so simple. I was willing to do it with her. She wanted to have some form of Orthodox Judaism within our home, and I knew how to fulfill that dream for her.

The problem was that I saw my kids growing up in a home that would explore all spiritual walks of life. When they got old enough to decide for themselves, they would choose their path, and we would accept them and be proud of them for making an informed choice.

She thought that was retarded, and acted as if I would end up doing what she said because she said so. We continued with this marriage, thinking that we each would convince each other or meet somewhere in the middle. I'll tell you one thing that I will not meet in the middle with: cutting my boy's wiener off. It's a grotesque and unnecessary process. I knew I would never convince her not to cut our kid's dick off. It was sealed in her to-do list.

Sociologically, we did not see eye to eye. She saw individuals on the group level, and I saw individuals on the individual level. Yes. She was a bigot. I'm not going to sugarcoat it. The way she talked about people who were different from her was hateful and apathetic. It played a big part in our divorce. I called her out on it. I broke my vows to stand against her hateful bigotry. I don't regret it. I do regret, however, how I said it to her.

It takes two to tango. I uttered those words to the judge who divorced us when she asked if I wanted the divorce. I said it because that's how I felt. Despite her hatred and bigotry, I loved her. Still, I knew a relationship requires at least two people to be a mutual relationship. Without her, this relationship is nothing.

I wanted to change her into a decent human being so much that I became her. I can blame her for everything, but I knew that my reactions didn't help the situation either. It would not be fair to say she is entirely to blame. The way I reacted many times was childish too. I would yell back in an uncontrolled way. So I understand where she is coming from.

As the French philosopher Émile Chartier would put it, there must be a hidden pin in those who hurt others. Otherwise, they wouldn't be hurting others at all. Meaning we only hurt each other because we both were coming from a place of pain and injury. I wasn't ready to allow the pain we both put each other through to bring me down any further than where I already was. I chose to rise above the struggle.

Before this all went to shit, I had plans to lose weight and build more muscle. Coincidentally, the day we separated was the same day I was supposed to start. I called it my eat-all-day diet. I realized why people have a hard time losing weight, and it's because they are hungry. It hit me to eat healthy foods all day and exercise. Ride my new bike and do pushups every day. Eat them greens and whatever colors I wanted to have for the week.

No way was this divorce going to stop me from taking control of my life. I had lost thirty-five pounds by the time we divorced three months later. And not to be mean, but just to share the irony with you, she gained thirty-five pounds. Not seeing her in three months made her weight gain more noticeable. In fact, it took me a long moment to look around the courthouse to find her. She called my name at least twice before I spotted her.

It didn't end without an epic showdown. As I mentioned earlier, there was a U.S. divorce, and then what I call the fairytale divorce because it has no bearing on the laws of the U.S. It only applies if you live in Israel or are an orthodox Jew. I was told that I would have to pay for both the United States and Jewish divorce. I realized I had to practice Judaism one last time to use their patriarchal bullshit laws against them.

I was told to sit down, shut up, and just believe throughout my marriage. For me, that's impossible because belief needs a reason, not my questions being thrown back at me. I jumped through fire hoops for Heather, paid most of our joint bills myself, and even paid for her shopping addiction because she never had any money for it. The week before she left me, I helped her pay off her student loan bill without hesitation. The following week, she told me she would no longer help with the rent and other bills. Not that she ever really helped out much before, but the little she did was better than nothing.

When she told me not only do we have to split the cost of the authentic divorce but that we will have to split the expense of the fake divorce (which costs more than a real divorce), I knew that I had to stand up for myself. The Jewish divorce is her bill, not mine. I already had to pay for the actual one. And since I never plan on getting married again to anyone who wants an Orthodox Jewish wedding, I won't need a Jewish divorce. But she does.

She wants to get married orthodox again, and I was willing to give it to her if she paid for it. I was ready to go through the weird rituals of a fairytale divorce if she ponied up the cash for it. I knew if I opened my mouth, she would find a way to screw me over until I agreed to pay for the Jewish divorce.

She made my plan work for itself almost up until the end. About three weeks before the real divorce, I planned to continue playing phone tag with the rabbi until I got an exact U.S. divorce court date on paper. However, she emailed me and told me that she recognized she was being unfair. She realized why I was not answering the rabbi back as per her request to call me every day until I scheduled a Jewish divorce date with him. She said she'll tell the rabbi that he could stop calling and that she would pay for the Jewish divorce.

I let my guard down after that. I even showed good faith regarding the security deposit on our rental villa. She said that we would have to write a letter with both of our signatures. I told her to let's keep it simple. I told her that I trusted her and to have it sent to her address, where she then could just mail me the difference. She broke that trust at the end of the Jewish divorce. At the end of it, the Rabbis who did the divorce asked us how we were going to pay for it and that while she and I discussed it amongst ourselves, they would talk amongst themselves. She then asked me if I wanted her to garnish my half of the security deposit to help pay for it. I shook my head no. Minutes later, the rabbi who married us, her, and I walked outside where her sister was waiting for us. He looked me in the eyes, and I looked him in the eyes, ready and knowing what I had been planning for the last two months was about to unfold within the next three seconds. He then asked, "Now that you guys had time to discuss it, how will you be paying for it?"

My eyes stayed eagle-focused with the confidence you only witness in movies, and I said to him: "I'm not paying for it. Not a penny."

He froze. His eyes were blank, and his mouth was open but incapacitated as if time had stopped. As soon as those words came out, my now ex-wife showed her true colors. She yelled at the top of her lungs with her finger pointing at me, "This is why everyone divorces you!" I responded, "You are the only person that I've ever been married to, and you are the only one who has ever divorced me."

She then threatened me, "Well then, I will hold on to your half of the security deposit and use it to pay for the Get" (Hebrew for Jewish divorce).

I took out my phone and said, "I make one phone call to our landlords, and both of us get nothing from that security deposit. You want this money more than I do. At this point, it means nothing to me. It would be wise to work with me rather than against me. She insulted me in front of her sister and the rabbi, so I cut her off and said: "You're a child, and you need to grow up!"

I'm not kidding when I say she, too, was frozen in mid-air. Her stubby little pointing finger and her open mouth were frozen in place for 10 seconds. It was as if this wasn't the first time she had been told this and that deep down, she knew I was right about it.

I proceeded to walk to my car. I noticed her sister looking at me with shock, but with what seemed like an expression of "Wow, he finally stood up to my brat sister. Good for him."

I got in the car and wrote the email to our landlords with Heather tagged in it:

Good afternoon Boris and Pahola,

Effective immediately, I would like you to hold on to the security deposit until Heather Rayburn, formerly known as Heather Zeitz, and I can agree upon splitting the security deposit. We will have a letter with both of our handwritten signatures on it given to you before the end of the week.

Thank you,

Chaim Zeitz

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Later that evening, as I'm on the beach, finally relieving myself of any false guilt that I've carried for the last 3 months, I get 2 emails. One from Heather letting me know that she will comply. The other email was from a listing agent letting me know that I got accepted for tenancy at the beach place I applied for just south of Margaritaville. The sun set behind me, and the ghost of her and myself drifted away into the ocean's abyss.

But it wasn't entirely gone. I would soon realize that Heather was not wholly out of my life. Maybe physically, but situationally, she was still pulling strings.

**January 2018:**
Trump is still president. The world seemed to be going to shit. My marriage went to shit sixteen days after the new year on a new moon. But this year, I made it my goal to make this my year. The number eighteen has a lot of significance in Jewish culture. My name translates to Life in English, and the numerical value for life is eighteen in Hebrew. I decided that this divorce was not going to define me. This is the year of Chaim, I told myself. And nothing was going to ruin that.

**March 13th, 2018:**
A misunderstanding occurred on the part of my now forever ex-car insurance company (proven with audio recordings provided by my forever ex-insurance company). I was dropped fifteen days before someone hit me on March 13th, which was seven days before the policy was supposed to end. I prepaid up until March 20th, 2018. And to top it off, because of the way my car was situated along with no cameras or witnesses, I was not in a position to prove her at fault. Upon calling the insurance company that I thought was still covering me at the time, I learned that they decided not to give me a single penny. I was mistakenly taken off as a customer of theirs effective February 26th, which was sixteen days before my new prepaid insurance policy with Allstate was to begin (March 14th, 2018).

Progressive Insurance, the now forever ex-insurance company, also would not allow me to access any required information unless I got Heather's permission. Even though I and not Heather prepaid for every penny of that policy, the main driver under the policy just happened to be her by sheer coincidence.

This perfect coincidence was her perfect chance to pull strings that would negatively impact me for the next two years. Along with not giving permission, she also was going to get whatever money was left that I prepaid for the both of us. If she got that check and spent it, I would be screwed. According to the insurance company, she received it. However, according to what her sister said that Heather had told her, she never received it. And according to the bank, it went into the bank ledger's account, which means I was safe-ish.

Twelve hours after the accident, and after a 379 dollar charge to get my ruined car out of the junkyard, I drove it to my parent's house to avoid a steep storage charge. At the same time, I waited for all of this to settle. I needed a new car anyway. I used most of my savings to purchase a pleasant little green Prius that I named Booger. After becoming nearly broke, I got a letter from a lawyer that I was being sued for injuries that the other driver supposedly developed from the accident.

Pfft. The other driver told both the cop and me that she had no pain. Now two to three weeks later, she decided to sue me? Fuck.

Another few weeks passed when I heard back from my ex-insurance company that they did an investigation and decided not to cover me. I tried using the state of Florida next but landed up with incompetent motherfuckers. I tried lawyers next. All the money they wanted was already used to purchase a new car. But then I get a call from the other driver's lawyer offering to help me sue Progressive, free of charge. They asked me to come to their office and tell them my side of the story. I was surprised to hear that they believed that she was at fault. Still, unfortunately, they are representing her, so unless I can get video footage, I'm at fault. However, if I found video footage, they say they would use it to get the responsibility off of me and onto her. But if I can't, they still won't come after me unless I was hiding five million dollars somewhere. In this case, they will go after my insurance company to get the money, and because they felt awful for me, they were even willing to take on my case for free. Later on, in 2018, Her insurance company decided my ex-insurance company would not pay and instead came after me.

So much for helping me out. I eventually learned that no lawyer could ethically take my case, so I was alone standing up to a large insurance company.

2018 couldn't have gotten crazier. And then it did. I had a syphilis scare in April. Luckily, after paying for several other tests and seeing a specialist, it was a lab error one hundred percent. When I was preparing to move all of my belongings from storage in June, I realized the previous movers had stolen my TV and broke half of my shit.

Sounds like the year of Chaim. Hmmm. You bet your sweet ass this was all in the making of the year of Chaim! I found myself spiritually during my stay on the beach and my travels through the mountains. It has led me to want to engineer a reality I want to live in.

There will always be problems to solve, and you either play the game or chicken out. I jumped into the opportunities I found during the year of Chaim, and it led me to a purpose. There was so much shit to sort through. I had the choice to let it all consume me or let myself devour it and grow stronger. I felt ready to give up at times, but I came to my senses and made it all my bitch.

The car situation was a win-win-win for me. I wasn't insured during the accident. That means my rates won't go up the next time around when I prepay Allstate for an additional six months of insurance. The second win, the person who hit me, unless I admit to fault, her insurance company poses no real threat because of comparative tort laws. That means the collectors can harass me, but I don't owe them shit. I'm not paying someone because they decided to text on their phone instead of paying attention to the road (Yeah, I saw you bitch). The third win was being successfully a thorn in Progressive's side.

Progressive eventually ended up having to pay lawyers to deal with me. I had nothing to lose at this point, but they did. The longer they have to pay their lawyers to deal with me, the more likely they will cave and pay me. There is the possibility that they are that dumb and stubborn, but if they are, no matter the outcomes, I will be willing to face them. I'm still alive and don't owe that bitch my shit at the end of the day. I can live with that and move forward.

I still managed to go to Ouray as a second pilgrimage in the middle of all this. I knew I would have to come back and deal with it, but I needed to go to Ouray for now. I was being called back. I was both excited and disturbed at the same time. On the one hand, I had time to myself, but on the other hand, I was shackled down to a seemingly bad situation that was going on. I didn't sleep that night before the trip. At all.

My alarm clock went off at 3:15 a.m. with no time to procrastinate. I got my three layers of clothes on, my snowcaps covering my head, and a duffle bag containing my clothes, bathroom items, electronics, lighters, a candy bag with gum, taffy, and, oh yeah, Smarties candies. I locked up and listened to the sounds of the ocean waves crashing while waiting for my cab ride.

I got to the airport and was there for a couple of hours only to find out that the plane wasn't arriving for another 12 hours.

Oh ho ho. Ho.

Luckily the cabin owners, Nova and Steve, were super friendly enough to not charge me for the first night since I won't be there until the day after. I took the shuttle back to my beach place. I attempted to catch up on some sleep, but I am not able to no avail.

The one good thing to come that day was my close friend Tati. She drove out of her way to pick me up and take me back to the airport. It is nice to see her, catch up, and reminisce. I feel like from here, everything will go smoothly. Right? Why not? Oh, of course, it won't. Why would it? It's the year of Chaim! The best year ever! Seriously.

I finally arrived in Denver. I rented a car and hit the road.

An hour or so later, it is one in the morning on the icy roads of the Rocky Mountains. Forty-three hours of absolutely no sleep when the most mighty snowstorm I have ever seen hits down. I can't see shit on the road, but luckily, there is a gas station to the right of me that screams salvation.

# Chapter 2: LOOK! IT'S A SHARK! NO, IT'S A DOLPHIN! NO, IT'S SUPERMAN!

**June 2018:**
I was walking along the shoreline when I heard the popping sounds.

Pop pop... pop pop pop... pop pop pop pop pop... pop pop pop pop pop pop pop pop pop pop pop pop.

There must have been hundreds, if not thousands of small fish realizing a little too late that they were about to meet their demise. They came too close to our matrix, and just like us in space, gasping for air, they were gasping for water until they died on top of the wall of seaweed on the pale beige sanded beach. They were trying to swim back against the current before they came ashore, hence the accumulated popping sounds. But like a black hole sucking everything around it, they met their fate right in front of me. I walked up to one, and I saw it jump slightly. I thought perhaps I could save one. I started kicking water all over it as much as I could.

It gave him an extra few minutes, but every time I wanted to go and try and pick him up, he appeared dead, and I grew increasingly hesitant in touching it. I tried to splash more water on him. He would jump here and there when I would do so. I started to realize I may just be furthering his torture. Touching it at this point right before I was about to eat my bean and cheese burritos was a germaphobic nightmare waiting to happen. He was changing color. He was gone. The seagulls then came in and feasted on what the ocean brought them. I understand they have to eat too. But that doesn't mean that I still don't feel bad for the little guy.

I was hungry, so I went inside my beach place and nuked a couple of burritos to enjoy at the shoreline while letting my chair sink into the wet sand. It's summertime. That means the kids are out. The moment I sat down in my chair to have dinner, I heard the screeching sounds of children. I never hated kids before. When you have nothing other than the sound of the ocean for five months, and then suddenly, you are forced to live through 24 hours every day of non-stop partying, you tend to lose fondness for children. Especially when you have to be up for work at 6:30 every morning.

No one else seemed to care that these kids and even their parents were partying with loud music at the oddest hours of the night for two weeks straight. My work night. Everyone else living there was retired. Their kids and grandkids were visiting them at their beach efficiencies. I was thankful that I didn't have kids yet. Maybe another few more years, but I don't want them for now. I'm starting to not want them at all.

They have every right just as much as I do to be there. I just wish those kids would shut the hell up. I just wanted to hear the ocean. I know they're not following me, but everywhere I go, there they are. It was very annoying, and I could do nothing about it.

The water hits my feet as I bite into one of the burritos. I didn't cook it well enough. Whatever. They're warm enough for me to eat.

Moments later, I saw a middle-aged couple in the water. Probably about 50 yards away from me. A man and a woman. The man shouted out, "What was that?" Within seconds, I hear someone on the shore say, "I think that's a shark." The couple immediately swam towards the coast.

As they reached the shoreline, I heard a lady say, "It's a shark!" Then someone else about 30 feet from them said, "It's a dolphin!" The shark lady gets feisty and responds, "No. It's a shark!" I then hear a third person say, "It's a dolphin!"

I knew I had to say it. I knew I had to be the one who brought it there. "No, it's Superman!" No one caught that. Too bad because I thought it was hilarious.

People were still waiting on shore until the shark/dolphin left. Those kids discussed whether sharks are afraid of dolphins or if dolphins were fearful of sharks. I wanted to put in my two cents, but I didn't want to give them the reason why sharks are afraid of dolphins.

They're kids. Probably don't even have pubes yet. I can't tell them that sharks are afraid of dolphins because dolphins are known for raping sharks. That would be super creepy. I'm like triple the age.

They continued to argue about it, so I finally said that sharks are afraid of dolphins. Short and sweet. One responded in agreement with me.

Like the triangular perspective of the fish, me, and the seagulls, there was a similar pattern with the middle-aged couple, the opinionated spectators on shore, and the shark/dolphin. If we could only see what others see, we would have true peace and natural harmony. But that's not the nature of our reality. If it were, things would be far less interesting.

The concept of conflicting perspectives is complicated but worth trying to understand. Why was one group of people so sure it was a shark, and another group absolute that it was a dolphin without ever getting a good enough look to verify?

I knew better than to take a side. That's why my response was Superman. I have learned to examine everything before choosing a side throughout my life. I have naturally become the devil's advocate. After leaving Judaism, I embraced uncertainty. It was spiritual. In the fog of unpredictability, you can either stand there and accomplish nothing or move about and explore. I chose to go exploring. In the mist of our existence lies the answers we're seeking, but we have to be willing to explore and not stand still.

It seems like most people, in general, don't like to move around in the fog. Most just want to wait for it to go away and become clear again. But what if the fog never goes away?

You might as well try and find your way to clarity. At least until the fog clears up. In the case of most things, the mist never goes away. It is always there to mystify all that is around you. The fog just continues to become denser. I wish I could convince people to move around in cloudy situations. However, once people confirm their biases, it's near impossible to convince them to move.

And who can blame them? From time to time, I am faced with a conundrum that I confirm my biases for or against. But if there is a hole in my logic, I always accept it and try to find a way to patch it up with something that fits. The piece is often given to me by others, but I often patch it up on my own. You can't fully live life if there are holes in it.

Living a lie is like living a life full of holes. It's not a very fulfilling life. I still have some cavities to fill, but many have been fixed up. Sometimes you just need to scrap the entire item and start from scratch again.

Like I did when I left my religion. I had to choose between my livelihood and my faith. I was born into it the first time around, but it was my own beliefs the second time around. Not my parents. I believed in Judaism of my own accord. I am the one who chose this time to wear a yarmulke and all of the other religious garments. I am the one who decided to restrict my diet to a set of laws from thousands of years ago. I am the one who limited my relationships with people because of that arrogant belief. So when I was forced to choose between putting food on my table or keeping my faith, I realized that my faith wasn't as strong as I thought.

I slowly started to strip myself of my Jewish identity for a year and created my own name. After choosing money over God, I began to feel like a hypocrite with every religious act I performed. One day, as I was praying in a synagogue with my community, I wondered what I was praying to. It was then and there that I felt a complete disconnection with Judaism. I began reminding myself to stop beating myself up for freeing myself of the religious shackles. I then met Elise and gained a different set of restraints.

Elise was the first serious relationship I have ever had. I've been in many relationships before, but I saw a future with Elise. She was also going through an existential crisis, but the other way around. I was on my way out of Judaism, and she was on her way in. At least at first, she was.

I learned later on that she had a clinical disorder. OCD. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. And not the type that someone tells you they have because they like a clean house. The actual disorder. The one that sours the quality and performance of your life and requires medication. Two weeks before she met me, her psychiatrist took her off her medication after being on it for two years since her previous boyfriend.

At that point, when she dropped that bombshell, I was already in love with her. Months into it. Just like later on with Heather. The crazy wasn't revealed until after the fact (Although, to be fair, Heather's craziness wasn't psychiatric. It was psychologic). Months into our relationship, Elise's OCD would manifest in more subtle ways, just enough for us to argue but not kill it.

I have a problem being defensive, and I have been heavily traumatized. I, therefore, tend to dominate the volume of all sound once in a while. It's a bad habit when I get to that level of anger. I have gotten better at controlling my volume. I'm a passionate person, so it's not necessarily wrong when I'm angry. It just needs to be channeled better. My voice does tend to reverberate.

No matter how crazy both Elise and Heather were, I have to admit my reactions to them were not well contained all the time. I could have done better, and I should have ended the relationship earlier with both of them.

I tried to end it with Elise several times, but something was constantly deterring me. She held my pinky hostage in her mouth with her teeth the first time around. Another time she through a public temper tantrum. After the fourth attempt at a breakup, her mother called me. She said that she was having a mental breakdown due to the anxiety surrounding her three-week religious trip to Israel.

I loved her, even when I decided to break it off with her each time. I knew she wasn't good for me, but she was fun. She did have a nice side, was pretty, and we had plenty of great conversations.

However, my transition out of religion was just too much for her.

She felt guilty that I left religion. She felt like she was the reason for my Jexit. I let her know that it was certainly not her who pushed me out. It was me and me alone. She felt that I conformed to those doubts so I wouldn't lose her.

It played a role, but it was not the reason for my choices along the way. I was with a girl before her in whom I was unwilling to pay for her unkosher meal, and she was ten times hotter than Elise. Choosing to work on a high holiday or not eat was the breaking point. Every decision after that choice was just influencing the inevitable in that direction I was already walking in before I met her.

I made it my mission to explore the unknown. To put my feet in others' shoes, even if I disagreed with their position. At first, I was bashing religion while at the same time questioning whether I switched to the right side or not. Playing devil's advocate assured me that I did. I grew into the role of the rebellious one, on and off Facebook as Chaim HaSatan - The Life of Satan. That is until I met Heather. Chaim HaSatan never died. His title just went incognito.

Just over a year and a half into our relationship, I was convinced to take down the mantle of Chaim HaSatan from my Facebook. I took down the Nickname, but I still raised digital hell. And then, the age of the Trump presidency arose, and thus began an alternate timeline for everyone. Chaim HaSatan had grown into more roles like standing against free speech for Nazis (2020 has changed my perspective on this completely). Instead of putting the mirror up to the religious, he shot digital bullets at Nazis and those who supported them.

That didn't take too well with Heather. She had an outspoken friend, an Orthodox Jew who defended the right for Nazis to have a speech platform. I simply pressed the like button on someone's meme comment on her post to get her to block me and complain to Heather.

A meme called her a Nazi, but my role seemed to have more significance than it probably should have. But I did make a new friend out of it. Amira. She was cute, clever, and seemed to have her shit together. Like me, she was able to bend based on new information.

I knew there was something special between us, but at the time, it was fresh. We were both still married to other people, so the thought of it turning into anything more than friendship was not on the table for both of us. For the first time in a while, I felt like someone was on the same page as I was. I loved her for standing up to Nazi sympathizers when no one else would, and my love for her would grow further in the upcoming year.

A love that so far has been digital but real. I can't say it's a traditional love, quite possibly, though on a similar level as I would see a sibling. However, weirdly enough, I was attracted to her as well. To this day, I have not told her that I'm allured to her, and perhaps I never will unless she reads this memoir (which she will because she is my friend). But until then, we are better off as digital friends. I don't even think she is attracted to me in that way anyway.

I'm glad she signaled her feelings before I revealed mine. Because at one point, I was ready to. I was already divorced for at least six months. She was back in her marriage for at least a few months after some time separated from her husband when things were gaining bitter momentum towards destruction. She found console in me.

I was her support as she was mine when I went through my divorce. I'm sure I can still go to her now for console if I needed to, but at that time, during the summer of 2018, she needed me more than ever. She needed me as a friend, not as a lover. I understood this. That was precisely why I was set on not bending into my emotions. But the situation brought us to a more intimate level. That intimate moment in time affected us both differently.

I was willing to take the leap of faith and let her know how I felt, as I was sure that she felt the same. But the moment I was ready to embrace my feelings for her, she disconnected herself from her feelings. I knew it had to be this way. I inadvertently and situationally put myself in the friend zone.

I accepted friendship for this long, and I would let her be if I truly did love her. So I let her be, and I let it be. That's how I know that I am her friend and truly love her. Because I'd rather see her happy than be with me. And I think she would be most content as a friend anyway.

Perhaps I could make her happy, but I guess we'll never know. She had a boy toy lined up before kicking her husband out with a restraining order. So I don't think I stood a chance from the beginning against the tall, handsome, and young football coach who was about to leave for college. And after him, she wanted to pursue a guy from work for a more serious relationship, so I had my answer. I still love her and respect her decision.

I almost wanted to end our relationship after she gave me the signal. The signal that she loves me like a brother. After reflecting on our relationship, I couldn't throw away something precious as our friendship, even if it felt a little tarnished by an almost revealed feeling.

I think she knew I was going to say something, and I believe that is why she worded her words the way she did. But in a way, I'm glad she did. It saved me from a more considerable embarrassment of having her tell me that she loves me, just not in that way. But then again, I risked being embarrassed when I originally asked her if she was going through a divorce back in January 2018, and the results bonded us closer.

You see, I believe Facebook was purposefully leaving me clues. I could be wrong, but I was correct every time I went with it. I first noticed it with my featured photos on my timeline.

I specifically took many pictures in Colorado to reset my featured photos of Heather and myself together. I could not find another way to reorder the featured images, so I figured I would take many pictures in Ouray. That should overpopulate my featured photo section. It didn't work. At least not the last featured photo. No matter how many photos I put up on my timeline, that last featured photo of us together would not disappear.

When I got back from my trip, I noticed that my friend Samantha who got married around the same time I got married, was acting a little peculiar with her posts. I decided to do some digging on her timeline. I have not seen posts by her in a long time, definitely over a year.

Facebook's algorithm decided to put her posts in front of me on my news feed. Her posts seemed very cynical, so I felt like they had something to do with her marriage. I read people's comments on her posts, and no one seemed to pick up on the connection that her marriage may be playing.

I was so in tune with what was going on because I was going through a divorce. I saw Samantha's featured photos had a similar pattern to mine, all pictures of just my friend, except for the last one that contained her and her then-husband. Because of this, I was able to put two and two together, and I messaged her. Ballsy, but correct. She was going through an even worse divorce.

That was in December 2017. In January 2018, I noticed the same pattern of featured photos with Amira. Her posts were all the same and regular as they always were, but her featured images only had one last one of just her and her husband. So I privately decided to message her.

**Me:**
I know I'm shooting myself in the foot for asking this, but I've been very receptive and correct upon noticing it with other people, and because I am going through it, are you going through a divorce too? You can tell me to shut up if I'm overstepping my boundaries here…

**Amira:**
You must be a psychic! I am not officially yet, but we are in the process of separating.

**Me:**
I am so sorry to hear that! I've wanted to ask you for a while, but I was too scared to ask! My divorce is finalized by the 16th of this month. If you don't mind me asking... What happened? You don't have to tell me.

**Amira:**
Driving now, so I'll tell you in a few.

**Me:**
Ok.

**Amira:**
Congrats on your finalization.

**Me:**
Thanks, it sucks, but it's the right thing to do. I don't know whether to congratulate you or say something to console you. Divorce gives confusing feelings in my experience so far. Anyways, I'll let you drive. Take care, and talk to you later.

**Amira:**
I'll take a congrats, lol. It's not a sad thing for me.

**Me:**
Lol ok. Congrats then.

**Amira:**
Well, he just has some mental health issues that he refuses to get help from, which are exacerbated by his use of pain pills (due to a back injury). Basically, I just can't deal anymore.

**Me:**
I'm sorry to hear that.

**Amira:**
The worst part is the kids. They have heard and seen so much bad shit. My son wants to live with his savta (Grandma) because being inside the house is traumatizing him.

**Me:**
Wow, that breaks my heart to hear that. I wish I could hug you, so here's a digital one. (I gave Amira a gif with an animated hug). My wife and I didn't see eye to eye on reality. We were still in love when we decided to divorce, but we knew we were not compatible. It sucks because it still hurts after all these months, but we were always fighting, one of those fights being about Gal (Our Nazi Sympathizer ex-friend). We didn't have kids, so my divorce is much simpler than yours. Remember that whole Gal facebook incident? Lol, funny how life works out.

**Amira:**
Thanks for the hug. Yeah, it's more complicated with kids. Yeah, I remember that incident, but why did you fight about it?

**Me:**
Because Gal called her and said, I called her a Nazi.

**Amira:**
Lol, she is hahaha.

**Me:**
I agree.

**Amira:**
We also see life from different views. We are from totally different cultures, so it's really hard. I'm a vegetarian atheist/agnostic. He is a hunter and into religions. I was raised Jewish, and there may be a god - I'm just not into religions. I still do the Jewish traditions with my family, though. Are your wife and her really good friends?

**Me:**
Heather (soon to be ex) was into religion too, whereas I'm an agnostic atheist as well. However, she was willing to bend and become a vegetarian with me. But that did not last long. And yes, they are very good friends.
Well, if you ever need any emotional support, I'm here for you, just one phone tap away.

**Amira:**
Thank you! Same to you!

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We became a support system for each other. Different perspectives working together rather than against each other. We became very friendly, even exchanging phone numbers for easier reachability. She was there for me digitally to console me in my darkest hours, as I was there to comfort her digitally. Our unique perspectives gave power to one another to continue forward with life. To continue to walk the walk of life.

Did Facebook orchestrate all of this, or was this a sheer coincidence? I know that Facebook will attempt to find ways to maximize your time on it. But either way, I bonded a new type of relationship with a couple of friends. Like an unofficial support group. Being open to different perspectives allows you to lead a more authentic and wholesome life. Sometimes other people are needed for us to see the bigger picture. In the case of the shark versus the dolphin, the people who encountered the being in question perhaps would have had the more accurate answer if they didn't run away. But it didn't play out that way, and therefore the most sincere and wholesome position was that of Superman.

# Chapter 3: WHAT IS LOVE?

When people say love at first sight, they mean an attraction at first sight. Love, on the other hand, is more like a building. It takes time to learn and build. Love is produced by a bunch of chemicals that are released in your head. Those same chemicals are used initially for the attraction phase.

With this in mind, those "Love" chemicals are what teach you and condition you to want more. You're not the same person you were before, love. Your brain restructures itself through new neurological connections when in adoration. Is it, therefore, reasonable to compare love to drugs like Heroin and Alcohol?

I definitely wouldn't compare her to Weed. That would be inaccurate, and it would also be an insult to Weed. Weed can create dependency, but the addictive behavior is nowhere as bad as Heroin and nowhere near as dangerous.

Heroin can create both severe dependency and addiction. In many ways, I was severely addicted and became dependent on Heather for my emotional well-being. I still had some sense of independence, as I never really gave up smoking Pot (She never found out - and yes, I know it was wrong, and I should have given her that choice of whether or not to stay with me). No matter how bad she was to me, I couldn't seriously divorce her, even though I'm the one who suggested it.

I allowed her to continue to abuse me, physically and mentally. I didn't break up with her the first time she went on a smacking rampage while I was driving. She was literally mirroring what her mother just did to her father over an hour before. I didn't divorce her when she went on a kicking spree to hurt me because of how angry she believed I made her. No. I stayed. It took me a half-serious suggestion to get the ball rolling, and even then, I was willing to keep our marriage alive.

So how is Heather comparable to Heroin? Let me connect the dots from above to the dots below:

Upon meeting Heroin in person for the first time, nothing impressive stands out immediately. Not like Weed, an eye candy. Heroin is acquired eye candy. You have to try it out at least once to be physically attracted to it. The next time you see it, you perceive its beauty differently. You realize that you are attracted to how it looks. You go out again. And then again until you're hooked. You learn more about it. You embrace it into your life.

Slowly, it has you making compromises for it, some with profound implications. Many with ethical implications. It starts to drain you financially and not care that you have bills to pay. You try to be diplomatic with it, but it gets violently upset that its demands are not being met. It turns everything around on you, never wanting to face the truth of just how bad it is.

It just wants you to keep giving into it. It wants to put you to sleep so it can control you. So it can feed on you. Feast upon you until there is nothing left. Your soul has been broken. It isn't the same as it used to be. And now... it's all gone. No more. But you want it so bad. You are still willing to work on your relationship with it. But it's too late. It's gone.

At this point, you choose to either continue to fight for the relationship or move on. I haven't made any attempts to get Heather back since we divorced. Since then, the fight for the relationship to continue was battled out in my mind. It wasn't until eight months after the divorce that I decided to ask my friend Tatianna to help me get her back. The fact is, Heather was an essential part of my life. She was a strong memory that wouldn't just disappear overnight. I didn't know how long it would take for the memory to not feel like it was from yesterday.

It was around Hurricane Irma that everything began to fall apart. Her parents were with us for almost a week. They were going crazy, her mother being the driver of it all. If Robert (Heather's father) sneezed, Mindy (Heather's mother) would start yelling at the top of her lungs and get physically violent with him. Heather would always brush this off whenever I brought it to her attention privately.

She would say that's just how her mother deals with her anxiety. "It's not a big deal." It was evident that Heather picked up her behavior and attitude from her mother. Physical violence wasn't the only thing that Heather picked up from her mother. To name just a few, bigotry, selfishness, apathy for others who suffer, and even willingness to benefit from it. Yet like a heroin junkie, I stayed.

The events stirring up around hurricane Irma were becoming intense. Category five intense. Besides Heather's unforgiving and unwarranted vendetta against a coworker of mine that she referred to as "a spic”, she was going through a personal financial crisis that she asked me to help her out with.

As mentioned in chapter one, I didn't hesitate to help her with that. However, I was not going to side with her racist rhetoric. When I chose my coworker's side, she attempted to use our friend Scotty to make me jealous. I knew she was just trying to get me to react a certain way.

I broke down and yelled at her after I realized that my calm and measured response was just being cut off and ignored like always. For the first time in my life, I remember I decided to wait an entire day to relate my feelings in a calm and measured way. But she wasn't listening and kept cutting me off and yelling at me even though I wasn't yelling or arguing. I wasn't even angry. I remember the way I felt. Calm and measured because I took the day to properly collect my thoughts. But within moments, she tore that whole day's worth of effort to discuss things differently into pieces like it was nothing but a worthless dirty rag.

I said some hurtful things. Things that I believe are so bad, I am having a hard time writing them down here. Okay, I'll say it. I called her a racist cunt, and I wish she were dead. I know that sounds bad, but I was at a loss for words, and the first thing after calling her a racist cunt that I could think of was what she had wished upon me several times before. A response was warranted on my end, but the way it came out was not the best way to convey it.

Sometimes I wish time could just freeze so I can gather my thoughts and communicate them properly. But, either way, the core problem was that I was too real for her. I had to suffer to get where I'm at, and by default, I learned to appreciate the challenges life threw me. On the other hand, she was brought up in a fairytale-like lifestyle. Perhaps that is why she was so obsessed with Disney. Because she never really grew up.

The following day after the horrible exchange of words, I got out of bed to get ready for work. Heather stayed in bed when I went into the kitchen to make coffee. There was a letter inside an envelope with my name on the countertop.

It pretty much said that she wants our marriage to work but that I need to go and see a psychologist if it's going to work. I walked into the bedroom. I responded, "If you go to therapy with me, I will agree to go." She replied, "No, I'm not going."

I responded, "If you don't go with me, you better have those divorce papers ready." She fired back, "I'm still in bed because of you! I called out sick today because of you! Look what you made me do! I'm so depressed because of you!" I fired back and said, "No, Heather. You're in bed because you like to create false drama." It became a shouting match to see who could shout the loudest. I ended up leaving for work.

When I got home, she wasn't there. She usually gets home before me. I had a suspicion that this was going to be another separation. It happened once before. Not a sleepover at her parent's house, but an actual movement of all her shit to her parent's house. I was right. I went to bed that night at eleven-thirty, and she wasn't home yet. It became increasingly clear that it was happening again as each moment passed. As I write this, my heart is pounding like it did that night.

The uncertainty was a thinly veiled cloth that night at that moment before she came home with her father. When I opened the door and saw him with her, I knew it to be true. She was leaving again. They both walked in, him holding two enormously sized suitcases. He put them down, and she carried them to the main bedroom closet. He sat down at the kitchen table, waiting. It was at that moment that I decided to go back to bed. Awkward.

I was frozen. Lying there as Heather packs as much as she can into the suitcases. What can I say? It was bad. We both were severely hurt. But she took my semi-serious suggestion seriously.

A couple of weeks had passed. Halloween fell on a Tuesday that year, so Tatianna and her boyfriend Benji planned a party the Saturday before. I was dressed up as Superman in transition.

Half button-down white shirt with a Superman shirt exposed beneath it. I also had on a loosened tie and thick black-bordered glasses. I was just missing my old reporter's hat. It was still doable without it. Art came to my place to improvise his costume. I gave him a tin foil to build his gangster chains and a visor hat to wear sideways. We then headed off to the Halloween party.

I didn't expect anyone to know anything just yet. I figured this looked bad, and Heather was always about keeping up appearances, even the first time we separated. Only her closest friends and family knew the first time around.

So when Tati said to me, "A little bird told me that you hurt your wife," I knew Heather told more than just her family and closest friends. I asked Tati, "Who told you that?" She danced around the question but then finally told me it was Heather. I told her my version of the story. Tatianna's response: "That seems like more of a complete story than what Heather told me."

This couldn't be good. Heather was telling everyone a twisted and incomplete version of the story. Looking back now at that moment, I have lost most of our mutual friends because of that convoluted and unfinished story. While I kept my mouth shut, not even telling my parents until just days before the Halloween party, she was blabbering off to the world, including on Facebook about me.

I only saw indirect blabbers about me on Facebook. Like the picture of her and her two closest friends giving the middle finger to the camera and captioning "middle fingers in the air like you just don't care." Another was Sam Harris's music video about being too good at saying goodbye. It was directed towards me.

I understood that she was hurt, but so was I. I don't even think to this day she recognizes that. She sees me as the abuser, which is typical for abusers to believe. Like Trump, he claims he is being bullied because everyone won't allow him to be a bully. Same thing with Heather. To defend yourself against their abuse is to be the actual abuser.

Like when she came at me kicking, I held her back so she couldn't kick me in the balls. She attempted to do so about fifteen times. Even though her kick was pointless at this time, as I was holding her back, and all she was kicking was air, she wouldn't stop attempting to physically hurt me. When she finally stopped, I yelled at her for trying to injure me. She turned it around and said I'm being abusive because of my yelling.

Such a Trumpian move.

But this was the era, the culture we currently were living through. Trump helped fuel this culture decades before he had actual political power. And when the fruits of his plan flowered, this is what came out. An organism of chaos. Indirectly, Trump fueled the flame of my divorce. But I don't blame him as we each have the choice to be decent to one another. She chose to be a Trumpet like her mother and father.

It was all manifested throughout our time together. Like when I learned how most diamonds are found, I was already married. The diamond on Heather's finger that I used to build an engagement and wedding ring with has been in her family for several generations. In that case, I didn't think it would be right of me to ask her to remove it, so I never did. I knew she liked diamonds, and I knew she would want me to buy her some more in the future.

She knew the truth about it just as I did from that show "Adam Ruins Everything." She knew the truth, and when we discussed it casually with her parents, they, including her, didn't care that children were enslaved over it. I asked her father hypothetically if they would ever repurchase diamonds, and their answer was yes. And when I asked them, "knowing what you know about how they are found, you would still buy them?"

Her father's response made me silent. He said it doesn't matter. That's when the thought came to my head. This is the family I married into. Trump supporters, racists, bigots, and the most selfish people I have ever met. But I still loved their daughter. I was disgusted, but I loved her. That entire night I was disgusted. I hid it pretty well, but I could not look at them like I did before. I saw monsters in front of me.

My wife and her parents just sat there as if the conversation was another one of our conversations. As if it meant nothing. But it meant something to me. I was at a crossroads. Should I stay, or should I go?

I concluded that Heather has slowly changed in mentality slightly. I figured maybe time is all we need. Perhaps I won't be able to change her mind about diamonds. However, she might change into a human being with my moral influence. These high hopes of moral change got me to stick to our marriage. It was myself convincing me that a monster of 30 years in the making could turn into a decent human being.

What was I thinking?

That day never came. And just like Heroin, the effects became worse. It became an ever-consuming life drainer. It expected more than you could give it, and it's gone when you have no more to offer.

On a late September morning in 2018, I remembered that I woke up with an overwhelming wave of sorrow crashing down on me. I felt the need to text Tati for help. Tatianna told me that in May of 2018, Heather got herself a steady boyfriend. It was hard to hear this. She also said that Heather lost forty pounds and dyed and straightened her hair. At first, I thought she was doing ten times better than I did. And when Tati showed me a picture of Heather and her new handsome, tall, muscular boyfriend, I felt like crawling up in a corner and pitying myself.

It seemed like she was doing ten times better than me. But as the following details will reveal, my initial feelings were premature. First of all, the tall, muscular, and handsome fella that she was all over was not her boyfriend. Her boyfriend was the ugly hoggish-looking guy next to her, pathetically holding his beer.

The forty pounds lost must have been from the extra weight gained during the divorce because, in that photo, she looked fatter than when I was with her. A part of me felt better knowing she wasn't doing better than me. But I felt bad for feeling good about it.

Perhaps this is all a show, as Tati suggested. Maybe she would be willing to work with me this time around if she were to leave him to come back to me. But just knowing how it all played out, I doubt it. I was the only one putting in effort throughout our time together, the only one willing to sacrifice things, and the only one who tried to be understanding.

I just don't understand how one goes from loving someone one minute to the next minute being indifferent.

**Me:**
Good morning. I know this is a wild request, but after a year of the feelings staying as strong, every day being sick to my stomach without her. Can you help me get her back, please?

**Tati:**
If I could, I would, but there's nothing I can do.

**Me:**
I understand. It was a stupid request.

**Tati:**
I tried when you guys 1st split, but she's so set against you. It's crazy how bitter she is. But we're not on speaking terms anyway. I have no idea what happened, but she doesn't want to be friends, so definitely, even if I thought she would budge, I could do nothing.

---
Tati then sends me a screenshot of a recent text conversation that they had together:

**Tati:**
Whatchya up to this coming weekend?

**Heather:**
*-No response.-*

**Tati:**
Are you free on Sunday to do something?

**Heather:**
Hey! Sorry, busy Sun! Maybe Following Weekend :)

**Tati:**
Busy lady :-) Sure. Let's make a plan. When are you free again?

**Heather:**
Lol, not sure! after labor day

---
*Tatianna continues her conversation with me:*

**Tati:**
After 3 months of this, I got angry and gave up on her.

**Me:**
I'm sorry to hear that. Maybe it's for the best that I'm not with Heather, but love never was a logical thing anyway, lol.
I don't know why she wouldn't want to be friends with you. You're pretty cool.

**Tati:**
Benji said she's afraid of me passing information to you, so Heather doesn't want to be friends because of something she assumes I'm doing behind her back. I might as well do it after being accused of it.

Since the middle of June, I hadn't seen her when she lost 40lbs, dyed her hair blond, straightened it, and got a new, steady boyfriend who manages a vitamin store in Delray. I think she quit working for Benji 2 weeks ago for somewhere closer to her in Boca. She gave 2 weeks' notice but only came in maybe 4 partial days during those 2 weeks. And that's the last we've heard of her.

He asked what happened between us, and she said what I mentioned above. She said I blew things out of proportion and that she would patch it up, but I haven't heard from her yet, and it's been 2 weeks. And a week after labor day, which is when she initially said she'd be free. So I give up. She doesn't want to be friends. It's her loss.

And aw, thank you.
You're right. Feelings are illogical but just as valid.
You'll move on eventually. It'll take time.

**Me:**
Wow. That was a bombshell. I'm gonna crawl up in my little corner this weekend, pitying myself, lol.
I am so pathetic.
Wow.

**Tati:**
You had asked earlier if she was seeing anyone, and I didn't think she wanted me to tell you, so I didn't.
I'm assuming you didn't want her to have anyone?
Or does knowing she's moved on help you?
No, you're not pathetic. It takes a long time to get over a divorce. Give yourself 1.5 - 3 years.
If after 3 years you're still pining away, then maybe it's time to seek a professional.

---
Tatianna sends me a photo of her, Benji, and Heather leaning on her best friend Christina's boyfriend with Heather's boyfriend standing by himself with a beer.

**Tati:**
That's before she straightened her hair and made it halfway to blonde. Just in case you wanted to see her and the guy.
Hoping it's more helpful than hurtful.
With Jan (her ex-boyfriend), it helped me seeing him happy with his new gal to know there was no going back.

**Me:**
She can be with whomever. What makes me feel like a loser is that I'm still alone and can't find any quality people that match me well enough. Now, seeing her doing 10 times better than me makes me feel bad about myself, but not bad about her.

I guess I should try and internalize that it clearly is over and be happy for her.

**Tati:**
We don't necessarily know she's doing 10x better than you. It could just be a show she puts on. Maybe she was lonely, and this was the 1st guy to tolerate her.
Everyone moves at their own pace.

**Me:**
He's much better looking, taller, more muscular...
I'm an overweight, short ugly guy.

**Tati:**

**Me:**
So yeah, she definitely is doing better than me.

**Tati:**
Yes to tall, but that's about it.
Are you looking at the right one?

**Me:**
The big chubby one on the end?
On her left or right (the one she is leaning on)?

**Tati:**
The cute one she's leaning on is Christina's boyfriend.
All the way to the right of the photo, the one she's leaning away from on her left is her guy, Michael. The one holding the beer bottle.

**Me:**
Oh wow.

**Tati:**
😆

**Me:**
At first hand, that makes me feel better, but paradoxically, it makes me feel bad about myself that it makes me feel good. LOL, if that makes any sense.
Is he at least nice to her? And do they seem happy together?

**Tati:**
That makes sense.
I only met him that one night and she was already super drunk. But yes, they do seem happy, and I think he treats her well. I'm not sure.

---
Days after, I saw an even more recent picture of Heather from the one Tati showed me. She was much skinnier. She looked happy. And not fake happy like in the photo that Tati showed me or the video I saw of her at Jen and Ty's baby reveal video, but an authentic expression of happiness.

It was only her in the photo. No one else. If she was still with that hog of a boyfriend, she sure wasn't into him enough yet to have her Facebook profile picture with him in it. Because with me, before the end of the first month, we were in each other's Facebook profile pictures.

Was it love that Heather and I had? I think good love is like appropriately tailoring your drug use. Like maybe Heroin isn't the right drug for you. Perhaps you require amphetamines 300mg twice a day, two joints in the morning, two joints at night, and two joints in the afternoon to make you feel alright. Or maybe Heroin is the right drug for you but required in small doses at specific intervals. So too, with love, maybe Heather wasn't the right drug of choice for me. Perhaps I needed to tailor my love connections too.

Maybe Hylyn, my next true lover after Heather, was the proper tailoring. We did get along quite well, enjoyed the same activities like smoking weed and having hours and hours of dirty-ass sex. We had the same interests, such as Netflix science shows, some she even introduced me to.

I remember the first night we met. Our date was scheduled for 6 p.m. in my backyard, aka Margaritaville. She arrived around 9 p.m. We ordered some pizzas from the pizza shop outside Margaritaville, just feet away from the performance stage. As soon as the pizza slices were ready, we grabbed them and walked behind the stage to reach the beach.

It was pretty dark out by the time we got deep into a discussion. We somehow started talking about the hair on her forearm. It was right about then that I knew that I liked her precisely because she didn't think like everyone else did. She wanted to prove a point by asking me to look at the hair on her forearm. I responded, "It's really dark out, and you're black."

Right then and there, she threw herself at me, and we made out until we went back to my beach place and fucked and smoked lots of Weed. Best. Sex. Ever. We defied gravity. And unlike Heather and Elise, she was totally into butt sex. Sometimes she would even dominate me and do vag-to-anus.

Is that what proper drug tailoring feels like? Because I never felt so naturally myself when being intimate with others as I have with her. It's as if she brought out the best in me. That has to be what love is.

# Chapter 4: THE UNDERDOG

I was riding my bike up the Hollywood Beach Broadwalk as I always do, carefree and with sandals on. I spotted a group of Black Hebrew Israelites just before reaching Margaritaville.

Was I going to troll them?

You bet your sweet ass I was.

But for now, I'll keep riding. They'll be there still when I come back around. On my way back, a reggae band started playing outside of Margaretville. The Black Hebrew Israelites can wait another few minutes. They'll still be there for hours to come.

The atmosphere was filled with the unforgettable sounds of Bob Marley. There was happiness and love in the air. Ironically, just a couple hundred steps south, the atmosphere was angry and toxic. I parked my bike in front of them. They saw me, and I saw them.

The hate they had in their eyes for my skin color was reminiscent of the people who have and do hate them for the same reason. My skin color was not good enough. I was supposed to be subordinate, a footstool for them. Those were their words to me. I was destined to be their footstool because of my skin color.

I never understood racism. I understood that thoughts come from conditioning and that we are all affected by the past. But I never understood what skin color had to do with anything. I know their hate was built out of a society that hated them for their skin color for so long. However, this group's hate has evolved from hating the oppressors to hating anyone sharing similar color skin to their ancestor's oppressors.

The origin of the word underdog came about during the nineteenth century. It was referred to as the beaten dog in a dogfight. This mentality was adopted by the Black Hebrew Israelites and has evolved into the underdog asking for a rematch. What do they have to prove? That they are better than people with white skin?

So here I am, standing next to my bike, hearing centuries of warped anger in the present time. As they carried on with their shenanigans, I raised my hand and asked, "Ummm, can I ask a question, please?" And their leader was like, "Ask your question!"

So I asked, "Do you eat bacon?" He yells, "No, I do not!" And then commands one of his subordinates to read a particular verse of scripture. After specific keywords, he shouted, "what!?" And the subordinate repeated those words. Again - "What?!?" and then repeat the verse. And then again - "What?!?!?" and then repeat the verse. They did this throughout the reading of Biblical passages.

I then raised my hand again and got permission to ask, "Where does the Bible say that the original Jews were black? I thought that they were Arabic?" He goes on to a quote from Jeremiah in the same manner" He emphatically repeats the verse. Some black men in the audience were listening to these guys seriously.

If I had to guess, these particular audience members were Christian because their reaction to my question was alien to them. Christians eat bacon. They are unable to understand that their religion is hypocritical. These Black Hebrew Israelites study the Bible and build their propaganda on top of that.

I also noticed that some of their members, particularly a Hispanic Hebrew Israelite, seemed to be soaking in what I was saying. One of them gave me an "I knew I wasn't crazy for thinking that too" look. I mean, the fact that if he wants to be one of them, he has to accept his status below black people is something that anyone would question in the same situation. Though I'm sure that this piece of information wasn't given to him until way after he accepted their group invitation.

Typical behavior in an abusive relationship. I would know.

They had an actual diagram that showed a hierarchy of Black people at the top, White people at the bottom, and in between was everyone else, including Hispanic people. Everyone below Black people was a subordinate. However, people of color were considered subordinate members of the Israelite tribes.

As our exchange got deeper, random people came up to me. They tried to convince me not to listen to these misogynists. One woman, whom the cult leader shouted down to force her to stop trying to convince me not to listen to them. He continued on about how she should recognize her place as a woman and stop.

It got to the point where we had a shouting match. I was mega trolling the Black Hebrew Israelite leader after he called me gay. So every time his subordinate tried to read the scripture about why it's wrong to be gay, I pretended to choke on some cock. I think they caught that on camera too. Hopefully, they'll have that up on YouTube.

I kept asking him why he couldn't love me as I love him? Eventually, a black girl, not associated with these fools, came up to me. I put my arm around her back as she put her arm around my back. She convinced me it's not worth listening to these guys. It's not worth putting myself on their level. She said you're giving them power just by communicating with them. She hugged me, and I hugged her back. She spoke in my ear and said, "I love you."

I said back to her, "I love you too."

Then the Black Hebrew Israelites leader said, "I'm glad my sista got control of you," or something like that. While the black girl and her boyfriend walked away, the leader of the Black Hebrew Israelites continued to scream and shout and have his subordinate quote from scripture.

At this point, I just got back on my bike and rode home. I feel the Black Hebrew Israelites' pain. It's the pain of the underdog. It's okay to be angry, but how you direct that anger is what makes you successful or not. It's an evolutionary advantage we gained to survive.

You produce love or indifference once you learn to channel your anger beneficially for you and everyone involved. Indifference isn't necessarily a bad thing, especially if it wasn't something to worry about in the first place. Only if it was worth worrying about would indifference be a problem.

Why did the Black Hebrew Israelites hate me so much? What does my skin color have to do with what other people sharing a similar complexion have done? Why am I grouped in with them? Is it because they, the Black Hebrew Israelites, are crazy? Chemically imbalanced? Then that means most people I know are crazy, too, my ex-wife included and her entire family. Racists. Classists. Tribalists. Exclusionists. Isolationists. You'd have to be crazy to be one of these.

What does it take for one to become one's "enemy"? If you feel indifferent, then they are not your enemy. If you are only angry with them, they are not your enemy. Only hate brings about enemies.

I don't hate Heather or her family. I do not hate the foster home that severely abused me in every way imaginable. I don't hate the kids in seventh grade that bullied me. I don't hate the music teacher who outright told me she didn't like me because my parents didn't want me to sing Christmas carols. And I especially don't hate the Black Hebrew Israelites either.

These guys were hateful and never adequately addressed the source of their anger. Now it manifests as hate towards White people. But they don't hate White people. They also hate their caregivers (I would include the government in this definition). They are angry at those they trusted and have been let down by. It's a man-made construct that many people are unfortunately too scared to address.

We are too scared to face and address our anger towards those we believe have hurt us. So we take it out on something more accessible. Something that we are not necessarily angry at but have designated anger or inappropriately amplified our anger towards that something because we don't feel intimidated by it. We make it the underdog.

It should be no surprise that the underdog often carries out the same pattern to someone or something else that they are the underdog to. In this case, White people. When you can't pinpoint one person as the source of your pain, the next best thing to reach for is what the source shares in common with others and attack them instead. And then these unrelated White people fight back. And then you call them gay, and then you have a shouting match of the Bible vs. cock chokers.

So when does it stop? When do we overcome hate and move forward? When do we decide to take control of our situations and become the people we are meant to become? When do we stop feeling sorry for ourselves and shed the underdog status? And when do we achieve the superman status?

You can't become a superman if you're still the underdog. You either have to prove yourself to others or leave and prove to yourself that you can become a superman. That's what I attempted to do and what I'm still attempting to do.

You can't always prove yourself to others. My divorce taught me this lesson. Losing many friends that I thought were mutual friends opened my eyes to a crucial piece of knowledge. In the end, you can only prove to yourself that you are worthy of existing. The friends who decided it wasn't necessary to ask me for my side of the story and just stay friends with her instead don't deserve me as a friend. A friend would care to ask.

The pain from the divorce showed me that my choices can have negative consequences that will hurt me and others. With each choice dictated by the ones before, when do you change course? Is it after the first incident? Several incidents? Many incidents? Or do you change course when it's too late, and others change it for you?

When I first moved in with my adopted parents, they gave me a choice to continue being religious and continue eating meat. They had been vegetarians for about fifteen years by the time we met.

At first, I decided to continue to stay religious and eat meat. I was nine. I just got out of a home that starved me, molested me, enslaved me, poisoned me, and also psychologically and physically abused me. I didn't know what to think of the choices given to me.

They found a hurting soul that needed nurturing. They took me from out of the depths of hell. They showed me what love was meant to be. I'm still learning what love is. That's the whole concept of it being a building. Not just when you're with someone, but when you're by yourself. Love is a never-ending lesson. It makes us stronger, better and gives us something to fight for. But love also requires nurturing and nurturing involves time. My parents knew this, so they gave me a choice to continue to be religious and eat meat.

Where I am now in life, I don't think I see myself becoming a vegetarian again. Thirteen years was pretty long of a time. However, I heard soon there will be affordable lab-grown meat. Therefore I see myself ending up as a Laboratorian. You ask, is that even a real word? Well, I saved you a step and Googled it. It is not a word.

There is a Facebook group devoted to Labrador Retrievers called "Labratarians," but no actual official word. So I guess in this use of the word, I will define what I mean by "Laboratorian ."A person who eats lab-grown meat. It was the solution to my moral dilemma. This dilemma began when I was 17 years old when my Dad decided to buy a Lotus Esprit, a sports car full of leather.

That's right. Leather. You read that correctly.

Why did he buy another car, especially one with leather? I asked him, "Dad, isn't this leather?" His response was solid in his mind, "Oh, it's okay, because PETA says as long as it was pre-owned and pre-used, you're not a part of the production of the Holocaust of animals."

Hmmmm.
Hmmmmmmmmm.
HMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!

I had to ask. "Let me get this straight. Let's say you were to go to Burger King, the person in front of you ordered a hamburger. They took a bite out of it and decided to sell it to you. It was pre-owned and pre-used. Would you eat it?"

"Of course not! That's completely different," my father replied in defense.

I always thought we were vegetarians because we valued the life of animals just as much as we do humans. I understand that the original purpose is not to resell it. However, if you're a vegetarian because you believe that eating, wearing, sitting on, or benefiting from any animal use is wrong, how is it okay just because it was resold? The reselling takes the value away?

Now mind you, I was 17 at this time, in which case I was a vegetarian and irreligious. I switched from one doctrine of belief to another philosophy of belief. At this moment, I began to internalize something I pretty much always knew. That adults are not God.

Most people don't know that their God and their parents (their caregivers) are the same. Eventually, their parents will lose the battle with nature and die and will not be there to be their authority figure.

So kids are spoon-fed pieces of God to be able to digest death. They are taught that they will have no one else but God to rely on for authority, purpose, and comfort when their parents are gone. Over time, the role of your parents who provided those needs transition into the God everyone knows and loves. The indestructible invisible Daddy. A father who will be there to hold their hand when they die.

Their parents, at some point, will evolve into the role of the gatekeepers to God. This all happens because people never fully internalize the humans our parents are. The children they once were.

This Lotus Esprit incident has made me fall away from the social norms of becoming a God-fearing puppet. As I got older and calmed down with my atheism a bit, I began to conceptualize God as a relationship between me and everything.

Like a rainbow, water droplets meet sunlight to produce a spectrum of visible colors. God is the rainbow, the water droplets are everything, and the light is me. When I interact with everything, God is produced.

Perhaps the fact that I was lucky enough to get adopted at age twelve gave me an advantage that the Black Hebrew Israelites never had. They never had proper caregivers to provide them with a direction to accept or reject. And because of that, the group leaders fed on that anger and turned it into a hating whitey family.

Trolling them would be futile. It may give me a couple of laughs, but it does not make anything better when I think about it. It doesn't make them feel any less of an underdog, and it doesn't make me feel any more of a superman.

# Chapter 5: THE SUPERMAN

“What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the superman: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment… Behold, I teach you the superman. The superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the superman *shall be* the meaning of the earth! I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth,* and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Despisers of life are they, decaying and poisoned themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go.”

- Friedrich Nietzche

## What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the superman: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment…

What makes humans different from all the other great apes is that a few of us decided to come down from the trees to live. Our needs and skills became different. That small choice to come down to live out our lives is what led later generations to arrogantly laugh at those ancestors who decided to stay put.

It has become a painful embarrassment to even think about that being us once upon a time. And so we laugh it off as if we are the epitome of existential perfection and nothing needs to change for us. But what brought the few down from the trees is the same thing that will bring down only a few of man to the land of the superman.

What is superman to man? Nietzche saw the superman in the same way humans view other apes: below man. The aboveman, the superman, is born from a course-changing action. Many men will not take advantage of this leap, but the few who do are the forerunners of the superman.

## "Behold, I teach you the superman. The superman is the meaning of the earth."

If the earth were uninhabited, what purpose would it serve? The fact that it has no known consciousness to be able even to ask this question gives us the answer. For the earth to have meaning, it must have inhabitants to cultivate its purpose. And so was the birth of the first living creatures.

Amoebas. Single-celled little mother fuckers that eventually would lead to us building cities and bombs on top of the earth. Behold, the nuclearman! The pivot in man's destiny lies here. As we ascend through the technological explosion, two paths lead to two different ends.

On the one end lies death and destruction. On the other end lies the land of the superman. The nuclearman in the year 2020 is unpredictable, but it seems like we are close to the path we will end up choosing. Perhaps a few will find a way to detach themselves from the other human apes and climb down the branches of our current home.

The way Nietzche uses the word "earth" implies a home, whether planet earth or a planet suitable for us to inhabit. If nuclearman were to destroy our current home and some humans found a way off it, the next inhabitable home would be where the opportunity for the superman to rise upon would be. The supermen would hold higher values and look back at us as we look back at apes - a primitive form of existence. The way to the land of the superman must first start with leaping out of our current environment and into unknown territory. This territory is suitable for the development of the superman, assuming we don't get eaten up by something else stronger than us before we reach this stage of our existence.

The superman would be free from our current boundaries, as when we left the trees, we were free from the limitations of the tree branches. The superman would have more freedom to develop higher cognitive skill sets and would build a better home to live on. Quality is the philosophy of the superman, and it is quality that defines existence.

## "Let your will say: the superman shall be the meaning of the earth!"

Nuclearman has learned to use the earth's resources to his benefit at the planet's expense and the cost of certain people. Little does nuclearman try to understand what his actions will cause in the future, as short-term profits are his long-term goals. If nuclearman continues to be short-sighted, then nuclearman has no tomorrow, hence no future for the superman either.

In 2020, nuclearman faces a heavy addiction, pulled inward by a drug that caters to his deepest desires through an algorithm that appears to know him better than he knows himself. It has learned and still is learning how to control our thoughts, behavior, and actions.

If this drug continues to take more and more control away from us, what purpose does the earth serve to the superman? What meaning does it give if not to become better than we are today?

You should yearn to be free from the shackles that man has been shackled to for so long, as the ape ancestors who came down from the trees desired to be free from the shackles of their forest. Nuclearman in the year 2020 feels this yearning as social media exposed its algorithmic puppeteering in the polarized environment we are living in.

While we can benefit from using the digital world to make the superman, it has and is being used to prevent us from reaching our most significant potential as supermen. Nuclearman is his own worst enemy. He doesn't have to be, but he chooses to be. He has so much potential to explode into the superman and fly off into greatness. Still, nuclearman in the digital age must first come to terms with how he uses the earth's resources.

"I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Despisers of life are they, decaying and poisoned themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go."

Man fears his death. He understands it is inevitable yet can't fully come to terms with it. So he invents another world in which death does not exist. The more he invests in this imaginary world, the less investment he has in the world he lives within.
The less time he uses in making the best of his term while living here in this world. And so, the manufactured imaginary worlds become their poison. Some know they are poison mixers and use them for short-term goals at the expense of other unaware poison mixers. But aware or unaware, poison mixers are not fans of what this world has to offer and will descend into death and destruction of this world for imaginary worlds.

Nietzche gave four recommendations that he believed are the solutions to man's dilemma:

1) Don't follow Christian herd morality
2) Own up to envy
3) Never drink alcohol
4) And God is dead

The Christian herd mentality extends further than Christianity itself. It includes anything that mimics its mentality. Astrology would fall under this, just like the Anti-GMO movement is just as guilty of this behavior. Just because one does not believe in the Christian god or any god doesn't mean that they don't also follow something of similar thinking.

The point is to recognize your independent thought process and do what will best benefit the earth's continued existence. Remember, the purpose of the earth is dependent on your existence. You are the meaning of the earth!

Next, owning up to envy. Envy is what got me to Ouray and to become the man I am today. A step closer to resembling the superman of tomorrow, the challenges I chose to face in Ouray were mountains that symbolized the problems in my life that I needed to conquer. And so I climbed them. I even fell a few times, but I would get up, brush myself off, and move forward.

Except for that one time, I fell off a mountain and dislocated my shoulder. However, after rehabilitation, I went back to Ouray and climbed some more mountains. You live, and you learn. No one told me the road to the superman would be easy, and I'm letting you know through my experiences that it is not an easy path to walk.

The following recommendation from Nietzche is an interestingly specific one. Isn't heroin, crack cocaine, or meth just as bad as alcohol? I'm sure a similar question had to have crossed his mind when developing this recommendation. His reasoning behind alcohol specifically was that it numbs the mind and takes away time from fulfilling your most significant potential. I am not aware of his thoughts on other drugs, but if he is against alcohol for its time-wasting effect, wouldn't other drugs like heroin be included by default?

And what about pot? Would that be included? I have written this entire book on the influence of pot and climbed mountains with joints stuck to my lips. I drove through the dangerous winding roads of the Rocky Mountains for hours and hours while smoking pot, and many of my best ideas were formed when on pot. So, I believe it is in a gray area.

You could argue that it should be on the naughty list, but I would beg to differ and say it should be added to the list of recommendations of things you should do to become the best version of yourself.

And lastly, but certainly not least, God. Is. Dead. Simply put, replace religion with culture. The word culture shares room with the word cultivate and the word cult. The root term, cult, is what all three have in common, yet it is the most despised out of all three of them.

When people refer to religious or political cults, they refer to an unusual group of people who do uncommon activities. But isn't that what all religious and political groups usually start as, if not all of the time? There had to be a few people who rejected new ideas, no matter how popular they were.

God only knows that was the birth of Christianity itself. So why are people so scared of cults? Or maybe the better question to ask is, is something a cult because it fits the agreed definition of a cult, or is it considered a cult because no one thought of labeling it something else instead?

What if, instead, someone would have called a group of people who could easily be labeled a cult a "fan base”? The implications are different. But if someone believed aliens were coming to bring them back to their home planet and thought the only way to do this was to commit suicide, would you still call them a fan base? Maybe hardcore fans? At this point, the phrase "fan base" would be synonymous with a cult, so it wouldn't matter.

Culture and cultivate, on the other hand, these two terms are more in step with Nietzche's thought process.

Reggae is my number one sound, but I listen to everything from the sick beats of Die Antwoord to more of a smooth jazzy feel from Claude Thornhill, to the blues of Louie Armstrong, to the hope of the Beatles, to the rebel roar of Black Sabbath, to the adventures of ACDC, riding up the Rocky Mountains to John Denver all through to Bob Dylan. I'll hit up some Eek-A-Mouse and somehow land on top of Cher. I dig the Celtic sound, but my mind loves to wander off into the sounds of Bollywood. You put on some dubstep, and you'll find my head in outer space while my feet barely touch the ground. Music is the color in my life. I have cultivated a palate of sounds that express my essence.

My favorite dish to make includes falafels with greek salad and guacamole when it comes to food. I make a mean greek salad and guacamole! Holy moly! The secret is in the fresh culantro and shawarma seasoning.

I have cultivated a culture that represents who I am amongst it all, and I didn't need an outside authority to tell me how to do so. Religion is known to do this. If we break down the word religion, it would be re and lig. Reconnect.

There is a much deeper definition of religion than that, but that would be the basic definition in the English language. Like a cult, religion requires seven requirements to be recognizable as a religion or cult: central story, rituals, central language, sacred items, sacred texts, a set of ethics, and belief in it all.

That does not mean religion does not produce anything valuable. It just has to be filtered out from the religion itself and cultivated into your current beautiful mural that you designed to fit Nietzche's recommendations.

In the end, that's all these are. Recommendations to become the best version you were meant to become. The earlier you learn to do what's in the earth's best interest, the more time there will be to cultivate these qualities of the superman.

When I was younger than five years old, I remember living in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York. My biological father Rocky and I would watch Superman on an ugly-looking couch together. It's one of the very few good memories I have of him. It's the one thing that was mine and his. The one thing that genuinely connected us.

When my siblings and I were taken away, I still had Superman. My comic books were my bible. I envied Superman on so many levels. Not just his powers but what he stood for. Hope. I wanted to be a symbol of hope for the down trotted. I even would dress up with a towel over my shoulders and boxers over my head in the hope that one day I would be strong enough to be the one that saves both the damsel in distress on the one hand and the world on the other.

As I aged, Superman matured. He became much more than hope. Through Nietzsche, he became a way of life. Something to live up to, and something to pass forward so that the generation of the superman may rise. We are but a flicker of the bigger picture to come. Once we arrive, all the ghosts of the past will merge into one image of the future: the superman. I don't see my generation achieving such a jump, but I see more of us being forefathers to it all. More than what was in Nietzsche's generation. A generation of unowned up to envy herd followers, drunkenly stumbling down a dullish cultureless path towards death.

In many ways, similar to our generation, but today, information is moving faster than a speeding bullet as we merge with technology. I believe the merging of us with the machines will bring forth the dawn of the superman.

It is then that money, class, and state would theoretically cease to exist. There would be no need for those things in the age of the superman. We would focus our attention on the stars, where we came from, and learn to be gods over our swirling ball of fire in the sky that was once our god.  This is the future I see for humanity. A hopeful future.

A little over a couple of weeks into my separation from Heather, I somehow landed on the footsteps of Nietzsche's teachings. My friend Scotty invited me out to go bar hopping with him, along with his new girlfriend at the time, Stephanie. Christina, Heather's best friend that she has known since age five, was there too. I thought it was weird that she came because she knew that Heather and I had separated again. But whatever.

Maybe she just wanted to make sure I was ok. To this day, it remains a mystery. We went from one bar to another, drinking and playing different games that each bar had. The final bar had beer pong. Christina was on my team. Since I bought her a drink earlier, she bought me a coke and put some of her Crown Royal liquor she had stashed in her purse in there. I haven't been that drunk since I learned how to party like a Chabadnik (One of the fun groups of Orthodox Jews and probably the most insane).

I was so drunk out of my mind. Scotty was friendly enough to let me sleep over at his place. He even gave me a blanket and a garbage can to use for my stomach contents. I ended up leaving his house at 6 in the morning. I was incapacitated for the next day. I was a hot mess, and I never wanted to see another drink again. I wouldn't do so again after that (minus two events, but my new feelings of repulsion helped to use those two times to solidify my Nietzscheist vow).

I have Nietzsche to thank for that. His four recommendations on becoming the best version of myself prevented me from getting caught in the crippling grasp of alcohol. I wasn't a fan of it. I never was. I only did it to get altered, but I preferred the mental bends of weed instead.

Alcohol had only acted as a replacement or a way to complement weed in my past. It was never my go-to drug. However, it was for my biological father. He was an alcoholic and a mean one at that too.

Perhaps that plays a part in my lack of fondness for it. During the times when I was forced to stop smoking weed, alcohol, unfortunately, would be the next of kin. Over time, I would begin to enjoy it during these periods and even drink it regularly. Like after work, when I would usually smoke a bowl, I would open a beer bottle instead. I was a bit scared that I would become like my birth father and that Mary Jane was the only thing stopping me from becoming an alcoholic.

Even though I have had over a year of no smoking and drinking because I was determined to succeed in paramedic school, there have been other times when I had nothing to motivate me, and it wasn't as easy to put my crutch down.

Puking my brains out at Scotty's and then stumbling on Nietzsche influenced me to eventually vow never to pick one up again, no matter what. Vowing never to touch alcohol again may have hurt my chances of getting second dates with people. It may have even made me look odd at parties, but to become the best version of myself outweighs any petty embarrassment I may get.

They are pretty simple rules for me, especially the one that recommends never drinking alcohol. I chose to get high and ride my bike instead. I decided to stick to my eat all-day diet and lose weight. I used my job to distract my attention away from the divorce, and for good measure, I decided to move away from everyone and live on the beach.
I desired to build myself into a better man. I wanted to stay alive even though I had contemplated death during this period. It is death that puts life into perspective, so I decided to listen to the call to Ouray.

My envy for Art's trip to the cannabis convention in Denver had laid the pathway for the calling to travel to Colorado. My original plans were to stay in Montrose. I bought an Airbnb and soon learned that the house was connected to a funeral parlor. I know I felt like I was dead inside at the time, but not dead enough to sleep with Death himself.
It was starting to eat away at me. So I decided to look elsewhere.

I looked in Kush Tour Magazine for places with great pot, and there it was. An ad for Ouray Main Street Inn. I looked at their website, and the pictures alone spoke more volumes than the words themselves. So I booked a stay with them, got called an "Ass Hat" by the Montrose Airbnb host for canceling, and found meaning in my life again on the mountains of Heaven. I even carved my name on top of one of them. I felt redefined at that moment.

My whole life has been a prelude to Ouray. Despite all the struggles and lessons I have encountered, Ouray was the haven that brought it all together in the form of its majestic mountains.

My first time seeing Ouray wasn't until the sun came up. It was an eight-hour drive from Denver to Ouray. I didn't get there until after nine at night. The day before was the first time I heard of John Denver and his music. Youtube suggested it to me because of my Bob Dylan list. I decided to play his song "Rocky Mountain High" as I smoked my first joint in Ouray. The first mountain I saw was Mount Hayden, and an overwhelming feeling of peace washed over me.

I haven't felt happy like this in a while. It was the first time in a long time that I felt spiritual in the presence of the grand nature around me. I had never seen mountains like these before, and for the first time in a long time, I could smoke weed freely and go where I please. I was not held captive anymore. I was a free man. I was free to rediscover who I am and reconnect with my inner child.

My trip was needed to face the inevitable split from Heather. Deep down, I knew I needed to go to a fortress of solitude where I could find myself again. I have been with her for almost a few years and almost lost myself in her image. Luckily it wasn't long enough not to recognize the road back to me. So when I found myself again, I came back down from the mountains with a fresh spirit, purpose, and more suitable value. I came back down with the heart of the superman.

# Chapter 6: WHO (OR WHAT) IS GOD ANYWAY?

**"We are the universe experiencing itself."**
**- Carl Sagan**

I had no choice but to adapt to new situations all of my life. Since moving from New York to Florida, all I have ever known is change. Not a year passed after arriving in Florida when my siblings and I were ripped out of our home and placed into the care of others who held different values. We were never with a family long enough to shape our values into theirs. We did not have enough time to get used to them becoming the norm like it would for most kids. We only had enough time to taste their principles, both the good and the bad.

Because of this, I was able to compare and contrast, allowing me to figuratively throw out trash values and keep the values conducive to a better life and a better world. Over time, I built a set of unique functional values.

However, my values are not traditional and cookie-cutted like most. I have had my fair share of scrutiny for it, but who are they to say what values I should hold? What authority do they have over me? I am the creator and controller of my image! Not others! And it frustrates me to know that I allowed others' abuse to continue for so long!

ENOUGH!!!!

Stop telling me what is good and just! Stop telling me I have to believe in your god! Your god is not my god! Not anymore! Not since I took over the steering wheel that fateful day when I chose to put food on my table instead of slaving away to a god, I had never met or seen before.

Today of all days, I write this! Yom Kippur eve 2020! The Jewish day of atonement! But I'm not sorry! I'm not sorry for being me!

Fuck you!

I'm not sorry for being a lawbreaker. I smoke pot and drop acid. Shoot me! Call the cops. Do you think you're so righteous because you hide behind your god or the government as a more tangible form of divinity?

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote:
"Herdsmen, I say, but they call themselves the good and just. Herdsmen, I say, but they call themselves the believers in the orthodox belief.

Behold the good and just! Whom do they hate most? Him who breaketh up their tables of values, the breaker, the lawbreaker:—he, however, is the creator.

Behold the believers of all beliefs! Whom do they hate most? Him who breaketh up their tables of values, the breaker, the lawbreaker—he, however, is the creator.

Companions, the creator seeketh, not corpses—and not herds or believers either. Fellow-creators the creator seeketh—those who grave new values on new tables."

Under whose authority does God work? The Jew? The Muslim? The Christian? Etc? Who? Depending on who you ask will depend on what answer you get. And that's the point. You are never going to get a single response. And do you know why?

Because, like Santa Claus, God is a construct of the human mind. He isn't real. At least not the God defined for us in traditional religions. This very fact allows us to redefine God in our image specifically because no one has the authority to say who (or what) God is anyway.

So I decided I was God. I am a creator, an engineer, an artist, an entrepreneur, and maybe even one day a baby maker.

When I divorced Heather, I divorced myself from the God everyone expected me to worship. I fully embraced creating my path, mastering every challenge that came and will come my way, and shaping me into the man I ought to be. Heather was the only thing tying me to my past god. Once she let go, I was entirely free from the table of past values that I had shackled myself to for so long.

I still had one shackle left holding me hostage. Once that broke, I ran to the mountains of Ouray. I knew nothing of this place, yet I ran there, risking my life on many corners. I did so because I was yearning for something meaningful to save me from my existential crisis. And then I saw it - Mount Abram. The defining feature of Ouray. It was the most captivatingly majestic mountain I have ever seen in person. It stood in the background, as one would see when driving into town from the north entrance. After picking up some weed from the local dispensary in Ridgway, within a minute or so, you can see Mount Abram. At that moment, you would be about ten to fifteen minutes away from the little hidden town of Ouray. From a distance, Mount Abram warmly welcomes everyone into the cozy town.

It lies deep in a valley surrounded by the parameter trail. On the northeast part of the trail is Cascade Falls. Just before you reach the lower Cascade Falls, on the highest part of the trail, right where I carved my name 'Chaim,' you can look down and see all of the town of Ouray. Main Street is the first noticeable feature of this gem of a place.

You can see all the houses, apartments, inns, and businesses in a single view. From the exact spot where my name sits, another landmark feature of Ouray is Million Dollar Mile if you were to look south. It reminds me of Germany's Autobahn, a road curving upward like a mega snake. There are hidden trails throughout the super windy part of Million Dollar Mile. Then, once the road straightens out a bit, the first stop is at Bear Creek Mountain.

I spent a lot of time in Ouray thinking about my life and its meaning. When my life crumbled around me, I was more confident than ever that I was the only one who could fix me and that the only one who would always be there for me was me. This understanding pushed me to redefine fundamental parts of my life. Who am I, and what is my purpose? What is the nature of my relationship with people?

The biggest one was what is the nature of my relationship with God? I know I labeled myself an agnostic atheist. However, during my first stay in Ouray, I decided to press the restart button, remove the label, and readdress the question. It wasn't an easy task to answer the question of what the nature of my relationship with God was. But being in the presence of the mountains of Ouray put things into perspective for me.

Everyone is in the same boat in that God is given to us as a concept, usually when we are children, and we define God as the source of all existence. Many even go as far as to say it purposefully brought us into existence. The silent understanding, a subconscious understanding, is that before telling us about God, we view our parents as the source and authority of our existence. In essence, they are our gods. That shifts when our parents and teachers tell us that the power over us comes from an invisible super-parent even our parents are born from and must obey.

My relationship with God ceased to work in this way one day. And my first time in Ouray, I redeveloped my relationship with God on acid. The versions of myself that I saw on higher planes of our universe were my mind's way of interpreting the unfiltered data that my brain could receive under the influence. I believe the geographical features of Ouray played a role in this acid trip. However, I reconnected to God somewhere on the line between imagination and reality.

The heavens opened up before me, and pulsating rips engulfed me in space-time. There they were, inside a pocket of the universe. I first met myself as a woman there. Initially, I could not tell she was me. As we continued our exchange, she became ever more familiar. By the time I recognized who she was, I had already finished the psychedelic trip and gained her insight.

The lesson was that I am an interlaced fabric woven with infinite versions of myself. That means, in some shape and form, our outcomes relate. The higher versions of myself are more aware of my existence than I am of theirs. Separated by only a minuscule measurement, I am what they once were in the present time. When they bend, I bend, but when I flex, they don't. Every decision I have and will do splits into infinite results, some being my best choices and others being my worst. Either way, they know me better than I know them because they are extensions of my current self.

That night, my first time in Ouray, they looked back at that fork in the road and saw me catching up to them. Somewhere between them and myself lay the current place and time where we met and exchanged information. Here, I felt the nurturing power of nature through higher versions of myself out on the balcony of my cabin in Ouray.

It felt good to know that there wasn't anyone else around to judge me and that I could open up and be who I am in front of all of me to see. It was there where all of us met. It was the place that broke down the barriers between each part of the process of my life, past, present, and future. At its essence is me. I only know me through me, but I don't know me through them. I can't entirely fathom what it's like to be them because they are extensions of who I could or would be. They, however, can fathom what it is like to be me.

It's akin to what Neil Degrasse Tyson has said many times before. Ants view us in a similar way we would perceive a four-dimensional being. Unless taken to a higher dimension, we would not even know of its existence as third-dimensional beings. We would gain a new perception of our reality below. We would completely understand our place in everything below the fourth-dimensional window.

Somehow, through the medium into the fourth dimension, I was able to, in some shape and form, come in contact with other three-dimensional versions of myself at a zero-dimensional point in space-time. The six-square-sided prison still bound me, but I was able to experience something from a higher reality.

Like when a square meets a sphere. We know that a sphere contains all three dimensions (length, width, and depth). Pushed through a square containing length and width only, you would only see a part of the sphere from the point of contact. That portion from the perception of a two-dimensional being would be akin to a circle growing in diameter as it pushes through the middle of the square. The being would not truly understand that it is just a slice of something greater. If they were to enter a higher dimension, perhaps they would better understand what a sphere is.

So too, with us trying to perceive something from the fourth dimension. The higher up we go, the more we see below.

This event is what I experienced on my acid trip but in the third dimension. My brain's interpretation of the trip comparable to the sphere going through the square manifested first as the third-dimensional shape of the lady version of myself without apparent facial features. She showed me my life's steering wheel isn't just controlled by me but by the infinite-sided dimensions of a greater conscience.

Can I even call it "me"? It would make more sense to say I am it. The only way for me to meet it at the point of contact is through all the other third-dimensional cubes on all eight sides of the fourth-dimensional tesseract. That's an infinite number of myself, all on a single zero-dimensional point! I believe that is why I was able to interact with them. Everything folded into itself.

They popped through the fourth dimension as a variety of three-dimensional manifestations of the infinite versions of myself. And through myself, I was able to gain a new heart of information. The unlimited versions of myself uplifted my essence through the chaos of existence. And from the highest mountains that I could climb, I found harmony in the fog below me.

However, I belong with everyone else beneath the surface of the fog, where it is the densest. I got what I needed from above the noise, and now it's time to bring some balance to the noise below. My coworkers were the first to notice it after I went the first time around. I was calmer than before I left for my trip. They said I seemed happier as well. And for the first time in a while, I felt free. I felt like I was on top of the world and ready to face my divorce with a game plan.

Spending time with myself in the Rocky Mountains during the separation was like being a kid again. There were no adults to tell me to grow up and believe what they wanted me to think was true. No one to tell me how to live. Just me and the ice-covered mountains to climb and play on. I wanted to reminisce on the past, tying my loose ends to my inner child's loose ends that he carried after all these years.

He has been holding on to these unresolved issues for so long, and now I have the opportunity to help him tie them up. The loose ends separated us. Since Heather and I split, I have had the chance to tie them up with him since then.

We still have a lot of tying up, but at least my inner child and I finally have the time to talk with no one to interrupt us. I had the opportunity to share what I have learned as an adult. I could advise him without any outside opinion. I would let him know that there will always be bumps in the road, but overall, it gets better.

I would also let him know that he should and will end up being thankful for all the challenges life threw at him from an early age. I would tell him that there are good people who will love him, but he has to remember that they are in the same boat as him. Like himself, everyone, including his abusers, comes from a place of trauma and suffering, no matter how different their experience was.

I would inform him that because everyone comes from a place of injury, they will project the hurt in their hearts into the real world. If you are not careful, they will try to trap you in the chains hanging from their table of values. I would remind him that they would try every step of the way to chain him down. And when they do, and they will from time to time, I would tell him that he must remember that he is a breaker of chained values.

I was born and developed into someone who isn't easily held captive by another person's values. The ability to adapt to new principles shaped me. I would have my inner child understand that he is a creator of values, not a slave of values. I would tell him that he is like the matrix that holds all of the infinite universes together - the shaper, not the shaping. I would say to him that he has higher values. And I would have him acknowledge that he can become a better man than he was yesterday because of it. But the most important thing I would tell him to tell the cops who gave him those black and blue eyes last night. Tell them the truth. You won't regret a minute of it. I promise you, kid.

My religious shaping in my early twenties is what brought me to eventually recognize my ability to shape my values and my path. When I grew up and went to college, I met an interesting fellow named Anthony Raquel Walker. The first time we met, he had a clean-shaven face, a neat crew cut, and was running for student body president. He was intelligent and charming, and he seemed to fit the description that he was campaigning for — a visionary and a potential leader.

He sold me his vision like Bernie Sanders did to me all those years later at the turn of "American democracy" (otherwise known as illusionary democracy). Not even a year later, when I was taking a world religions class trying to find myself, he appeared to me as an angel. At least the light shining over him in a blinding manner made him out to appear angelic.

I was in the computer room in the college library, at war with a master debater on the other end of the internet when he walked up to me. His shadow is what gave notice to me. I looked up at a black man with a Muslim-looking yarmulke and a long beard. He then sat down next to me. His face was familiar, but his message was new. By the time I recognized him, he already had me deep in thought.

Captivated by mystery, I would soon come to terms with Judaism because of my newly formed relationship with Anthony. If it wasn't for him and my cousin Yitzchak, I don't think I would have come back to Judaism.

Anthony came from a religious Christian background, his father being a priest from Jamaica. He ended up rejecting his family values, only to be turned down for fifteen years by Rabbis, who wouldn't give him the time in the world to convert to Judaism. Nevertheless, Anthony kept on persisting and, to some degree, continues to this very day. He eventually settled for a conservodox conversion. But before that, and just after my divorce, he would try to convince me to go back to Judaism from time to time. Things slowly became sour between Anthony and me for a while.

At that point, he lost his touch with reality, and I didn't recognize the intelligent and charming potential leader he once was when I first met him. Things have changed dramatically since the first day we met. I don't regret returning to Judaism or leaving it a second time. They were learning curves. Where I am now, this experience prepared me for life ahead. It would lead me on the path to forming my connection with a god that is more tangible than what the grownup in my life taught me. It is a god that does not require faith, just appreciation for its majestic symmetry. It is a god that is more than just an idea. It is also an object of desire. A god that will take more than an entire lifetime to understand.

I think I had (And maybe to some degree still) an obsession with the concept of infinity when I was younger. The earliest memory of this obsession was my thought experiment from when I was eleven years old. I drew a mental line between myself and someone else at any point in space. I conclude that no matter where they go, no matter what planet or object is in the way, they will always be in my direction.

I furthered my conclusion that everything must be part of some great circle. The obsession grew even more profound in my early twenties. At age seventeen, I believe the Lotus event with my dad helped land me on this loop. That conversation made me question everything I knew, from the ethics of vegetarianism to the understanding of God and his role in Judaism.

After acing my summer astronomy course, I decided to take a world religions course as a newly identified pantheist. I had never heard of the term "Pantheist" before until someone asked me if I was. I looked it up, and I could understand why he asked. The ideas that I thought up and drew out on paper were consistent with Boruch Spinoza's views of the universe and God. That means my thoughts weren't as crazy as some people said. I decided I may be onto something and decided it would be good to follow it down the rabbit hole.

So I did. I jumped into my first day of World Religions. It was a night class. It wasn't dark out yet, but there was no sun either. The only two people I remember from that first class are the professor and the pretty girl next to me named Sonya. (or across from me - I can't fully remember). I had my yarmulke on my head. I was not an Orthodox Jew again just yet. I wore it to remind myself of where my background. That attracted her to come up to me in the halls and start a conversation during the break.

She asked me if I was Jewish and if I would teach her Hebrew. I remembered how to read and write it, but I never really learned how to hold down a whole conversation. Anyway, we decided to meet up to go over the Hebrew language together at a waffle house in my college town of Davie, AKA Confederate Central. We had a pretty good time that night.

The next time we hung out, it was at my apartment. We watched an Orthodox Jewish Reggae Rapper - Matisyahu, do an Israeli tour documentary together on my couch. Our legs magnetically pulled together to rub on each other. Before I knew it, we were ripping each other's clothes off. To this day, I have never had anyone make me orgasm from a blow job other than her before. She was on fire. Her boobs were squirting milk, and it tasted like sweet heaven.

I never thought too deep into it until the documentation of these words on this page, but she may have been pregnant. It would explain everything that took place in our relationship. We held different values. I was evolving from pantheism to panentheism. She was not the strictest but still practiced Christianity and took the bible at face value. She took me to church with her once, and I took her for falafels another time. However, our relationship did seem based on sex.

After breaking up the second time, we decided to get back together a third time. We planned to meet at the Olive Garden this time. She never showed, and I remember being furious. We ended up rescheduling. She told me she has an older gentleman friend who needs to be picked up at the airport first, and after Sonya drops him off, she'll meet up with me at the college. She never showed. I called her many times until she picked up and told me never to call her again or she would call the cops. I never bothered her again after that.

What happened? Why did she throw me out like that? It must be because she was pregnant and that it was with that older gentleman she talked about to me. I remember her talking about him almost as someone significantly intimate in her life. I'm now thinking that guy is her husband or sugar daddy, and he came back from his business trip, and she did not need a boy toy anymore.

I think her pregnant ass was horny, and all she had was me, a guy eight years younger. She wasn't popping pregnant at all. She had a fit, skinny body, so I did not think she was pregnant at the time and for years after. Plus, she told me that she wasn't and that milk can sometimes come out of women who are not pregnant. After she said that, I barely thought about it. Maybe once or twice. But even if she was telling the truth about the milk, the other shady shit still points in that direction, more so than any other explanation.

It really could be because we disagreed ideologically on things. Or maybe she was pregnant with Mr. rich grandpa's semen, and he happened to come back while I was incessantly calling her, and she dropped me, so I didn't ruin her sugar shacking. I don't know.

It wasn't long after the breakup that I bumped into Anthony. Both he and my cousin Yitzchak attempted to persuade me to believe in the existence of God and the "truth" of Judaism.

One night, my cousins Yitzie and Aaron were hanging out with me at my apartment in Davie. We were deep into a discussion about the nature of God. I was at a turning point in my spiritual perspective. I went from a perspective of God being the universe to the universe being part of God. They didn't convince me yet that God wanted us to follow a set of laws or had a will.

It was then that my cousin mentioned God being infinite. That's what caught my attention.

"What did you say?" I asked Yitzchak.

He replied, "I said God is infinite."

I never thought of God from that perspective. I always imagined God as a man-looking figure somewhere above us. It was at that moment that my perspective on religion changed. Suppose God was infinite, indivisible, and had no form, as my cousin Yitzie put it. In that case, God could theoretically do anything, thus rendering Judaism potentially the truth. But I still was not 100 percent convinced.

What makes Judaism different from Christianity? My cousin answered, "No other religion can claim that six million people, an entire nation, saw and heard God talk to them. No one has ever made such a claim because no one has thousands of generations of those who kept it alive to say it is true.

That was the golden statement that got me to believe Judaism was the correct religion. Out of all the beliefs I've been studying, Judaism was the only one left on the table. The more I argued with it, the closer I got to believing in it again until I embraced it into my life completely.

My Aunt told me about a rabbi - Rabbi Posner, who's not too far from me in Confederate Central. She didn't call it that, but I find it funny because Davie was once known as Confederate Central. There were still remnants of them when I was living there.

Anyway, she told me that he holds services for the college kids at Nova. I believed in Judaism at this point, and I knew I had to change how I lived. I learned from the Rabbi that I don't have to jump into the deep end to start. He said that since I have been so saturated in the non-Jewish world for so long, I should take baby steps in the shallow end. So I did.

I first stopped watching TV on Saturdays. Then I stopped using my phone on Saturdays. Then I stopped driving my car on Saturdays and would sleep over at the Rabbi's house to keep the Sabbath.

Rabbi Posner convinced me that making a blessing and eating an animal is one of the biggest mitzvahs (God's commandments, AKA good deeds) a Jew can do. So I started in the opposite direction of my initial transition to vegetarianism. I enjoyed manufactured fish with horseradish on a beautiful Friday night for the first time in over a decade. Not long after that, I tried poultry and then eventually red meat. I felt it was the best and the healthiest way to not get sick after thirteen years of not having any.

What is funny is that fish was the very last meat I gave up when transitioning to vegetarianism. After a kid in school asked me why I ate fish if I cared about the life of other animals. It was the only meat my foster parents, Fran and David (my now adopted parents), and I still ate. I couldn't argue with him and decided to live the most genuine path. To stay true to my values years later, I made a blessing on that first official bite of fish on that Shabbos night, as the Rabbi advised.

After the inevitable fall back to eating meat, I completed my transformation back to Orthodox Judaism. I moved closer to my Aunt and Uncle, where a synagogue was within walking distance.

I was on a new road with new shoes. I saw and felt the world in a way I never imagined I could. Orthodox Judaism was more real to me than it was the first time around.

It was my Judaism. I found it. And I was more confident than ever that I was onto something big here. I let it consume my every thought, even when I masturbated. Pathetic. I know. You don't have to say anything.

The Torah answered my life's most important questions and woes. The Jewish bible. As if God were speaking directly to me through this book and every action in my life.

My first meaningful spiritual experience was in the parking lot of an Office Max. That same yarmulke that I was wearing since the Lotus incident (and subsequently in that world religions class) was the same one I wore when I became religious again. The problem was that I had nothing to hold it on with, so if I moved my head too fast, or the wind was strong, it was see you in St. Louie, pal.

I eventually learned to feel for when and where it would fly off to catch it, but the time came when even my mad Kung Fu skills could not face such a heavy force. A mighty wind blew across the parking lot of OfficeMax when it grabbed my yarmulke and blew it towards the front of the store. I chased that son of a bitch, but it kept beating me. I finally was able to grab it. I picked it up, kissed it, looked up at the sky, and said: "Yeah, yeah, I know, I have to get pins for it."

It was right then and there that I understood who and what God is. And for shits and giggles, it was as if God himself was confirming with a joke by having a fully dressed head-to-toe nun with a six-inch cross around her neck walk into the store before me.

The foundation to the relationship of the god I'm in a relationship with is that if I don't want the yarmulke to keep blowing off my head, stop being an idiot and buy a few pins!

I realized God has always talked to me, and I never listened! In this case, he was telling me to put on pins if I didn't want to waste time chasing my yarmulke. Such a simple act of nature brought me closer to my roots.

But the novelty would turn into arrogance and absolutism. While I may have made new friends and family, I started to alienate my other family and friends. When I am passionate about something, I tend to be obsessive.

That ends up turning people off. But my parents? They are like anti-explosives. I'm not saying they didn't have their moments when they felt like abandoning me, but they never did, not even when I was a complete douchebag.

I remember the eve of my turning. My father and I were arguing about the liberal movements of Judaism. I intensely believed these unkosher groups were not going to last much longer. He was a Conservative/Reform Jew. In his mind, the only form of Judaism going extinct was Orthodox Judaism. I was harsh on him that night.

I got a phone call from American Ambulance not even twelve hours later. I was surprised since I applied to them months before this incident and never heard back. I was even desperate to find a job that I looked elsewhere, like grocery stores. They said they had accepted my application for hire and that I needed to do orientation to move forward with them.

The only two available days fell on the high holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Sukkos. I let them know that those days are high holidays in my religion, and they told me that I could reapply in December. However, there was no guarantee that there would be an opening. They made that clear. I spent the next few days figuring out what I should do. Was God trying to teach me a lesson for being a prick to everyone about Judaism? Even if an intelligent being was not trying to teach me a lesson, I learned one.

My next Rabbi tried persuading me to sleep on his couch while I worked at one of his butcher shops to stay faithful to God. I remembered that my biological father was once in a similar situation a decade and a half ago with the same Rabbi. He slept on his couch for quite some time and worked for him in one of his butcher shops. My biological father was a lazy drunk parasite. I did not want to end up like him. So I turned down the Rabbi's offer. I chose to do the orientation on Sukkos instead.

After orientation was over, I felt torn in half. Everything felt disconnected. I felt like an imposter every time I prayed, put on the leather wrappings of the tefillin, or performed any Jewish practice in general. I felt like I was wearing someone else's skin. One Sabbath day, as I was praying, I paused and asked myself: "Who am I praying to?"

That question engulfed my mind for days until I concluded that I didn't know if God existed and wanted me to fulfill his will. I wasn't a disbeliever just yet, but my stance on knowledge had shifted from absolute and arrogant to uncertain and humble.

Not too long after, Elise came into the picture. And then she was out nine months later.

And the next significant romance, Ziyona, an Orthodox from birth but traumatized individual, would try to get me to go back to Judaism. But after Elise, I was sure of my uncertainty about supernatural explanations, so it did not work out with Ziyona. The only person who could get me to at least face back in that direction was Heather. She could never convince me to believe in it again, but she convinced me to participate since I was married. She would trick me into doing things throughout our marriage.

Like this one time, a couple of weeks before the high holiday of Yom Kippur, she told me that she got us two free tickets to Yom Kippur services. All we would have to do was listen to a lecture a few days before Yom Kippur services. The night of the speech, as we were about to get in the car to drive off to it, she told me that the name of the lecture was: "Why God is Not Dead." Now it made sense why she waited until the last minute to tell me the title for the discourse. Because she knew I would resist going if I knew that it would be about bashing atheists.

We got there. It was inside a synagogue. The Rabbi asked everyone there who in the audience was an atheist. I looked all around, and not one person raised their hand — it kind of makes sense. No one who willingly goes to a synagogue would be an atheist. I wasn't a willing subject. I was the exception.

I started to slowly raise my hand when Heather grabbed it and shoved it down. The Rabbi saw it anyway. I was his target for the next two hours. I got called an idiot twice, stupid, and many other names. I just sat there. I wanted to say something, but I knew the message would not go well.

I did, however, get to correct a couple of misquotes of famous atheists that he tried to use to prove why atheists are retarded. But there were so many misquotes, and I knew Heather didn't want me to be rude and keep correcting him.

According to Heather, I just had to have faith. When asked why I need to believe, my question was thrown back at me: "Because you just gotta have faith!" I could not accept this answer, and I'm sure my rejection played a role in our divorce. When she divorced me, not only did I lose her, I lost the burden of my past.

For quite some time, even throughout my time with Heather, I tried fitting myself in boxes, including the label of agnostic atheism. However, my divorce has shown me that I don't have to be limited to a package. I never neatly fit in them anyway. I may closely resemble the box of agnostic atheism, but my views would render me not fit for that box either. Pantheist? I once was labeled one, but I don't neatly fit in there either.

Will I ever find a box that fits me and is conducive to my growth? Perhaps not. Therefore I am free to roam around. Since my divorce from Heather, I have been more comfortable not boxing in God. You can't mold something if stored away in a box. God has to be taken out and shaped in your image to be understood. That's the only way to answer who or what God is.

# Chapter 7: THE LABYRINTH AND THE HEART SHAPED ROCK

**May 2018:**
Life is a labyrinth. A confusing and risk-taking maze that brings you to face your deepest and darkest challenges the further along you walk. The further you go in life, the more risk you're taking that could end it before anything meaningful happens to define your reason to exist. Once you reach the end of the labyrinth, you're forced to face the center of your life.

Heather became the center focus for me when we married. A new spirit awoke through the tunnel out of my marriage because of my time in Ouray. I was ready to face Heather in person to divorce her and then walk a new labyrinth and create a new purpose to challenge my way towards.

A little less than five months after my divorce, I decided to visit a hippie farm in Boulder called The River House after spending the first half of my trip in Ouray on my second visit to Colorado. It was such a beautiful place. The house was situated on the side of a fast-flowing creek covered in a mad design of something that I would soon find to be something more than the ordinary.

The artwork would soon reveal just how mad the artist behind all of this work was. His name was MysterE. When I first arrived, I was greeted by his incredible other half at the time, Miranda. The first thing that I noticed when I parked was the creek itself.

I was a bit confused with all the strings and mirrors and other mysterious objects above it that spun around. On the walk to go inside the house, I was introduced to other guests staying there. We finally got inside, I was told to leave my shoes at the door, and from there, I was shown where my bedroom was. I got lucky. I got the best room in the house: The loft.

There was something mysteriously familiar about MysterE. I couldn't put my finger on it just yet, but I would soon find out after walking the labyrinth in his garden while on acid just who MysterE reminded me of. It was the person who has haunted my life for many years. MysterE was a manifestation of qualities, traits, and physical features resembling Robin Stein, one of my foster mothers. If most people had found out what she had done to my siblings and me, they would call her a monster.

Many years after my siblings and I left her family, they were still admired and looked up to in their community as righteous people. They lived luxurious lifestyles, especially their middle son, Ari, perhaps an even greater monster than his mother.

He became a successful fashion designer and famous douchebag on a Miami reality TV show. Many years later, he caught Lyme disease and developed severe arthritis and many other complications. My sister Rivkah shared the news by showing my siblings and me his GoFundMe page that his friend started. His parents wouldn't pay even a penny to save their son's life because he was gay.

We were at our family reunion when they met Heather for the first time. We weren't engaged yet. Not for another two months. We were all in New York in my grandmother's kitchen in Port Jefferson. We were sitting around the kitchen table reminiscing when the subject of the Steins came up.

The irony hit harder than a bag of bricks. A part of me felt like justice had been served, but the other felt terrible for Ari. I enforced the belief in my head that his suffering wasn't going to help me heal. I have already come to terms with it all. That's why his suffering won't fix or change anything in my life, especially now.

We were placed in the care of the Steins a year after we were reunited. Before the Steins, Rivkah and I were placed in the care of a semi orthodox Jewish family. In contrast, Raizel and Boruch were placed in the care of a Jews-for-Jesus family (Christians disguised as Jews).

Raizel was confident that she and Boruch would be placed in the Orthodox Jewish home. She felt the need to make fun of Rivkah and me because she believed we would be set in the nonreligious household. Rivkah and I didn't care one bit. So when we were placed in the care of the religious family, we knew Raizel was going to have a meltdown. A year of separation, and we were brought back together. Raizel finally got her wish. Both her and Boruch came to live with the semi-religious Simons and us.

The Simons loved drama. I felt like I was living through something similar to the Spanish inquisition every other day. Some new bullshit accusation would be made against me regularly. And then I would have to stand in front of the judges who would decide which twisted fate I would receive for the most bogus claims held against me. Most were untrue. The rest were just misunderstandings.

Like when their cleaning maid found a toy that wasn't mine in my backpack. She told Reina (the foster mother) that I stole a toy. What happened was a boy from the playground let me borrow it. He gave it to me before the weekend, and I'm sure the boy would have queried me about his possession the next week if I didn't bring it back. So that Sunday before school, I was accused and put on trial, only to stand before the judge and get my punishment.

The weirdest incident was when I woke up early to go to the bathroom one morning. I went to pee, and then I came straight back to bed. I was woken up sometime later and ripped out of bed to be put on trial. Gedale, their oldest son, accused me of supposedly peeing on my brother Boruch's toy when I was in the bathroom by myself with the door closed. And allegedly, I did this while my brother was sleeping. He hadn't even woken up yet to know that I was being accused of this. My punishment was to have my favorite toy broken to pieces by Sandy Simon, the foster step-dad, right in front of me.

About six months after Raizel and Boruch arrived to live with us, we were all taken out and placed into an even darker, more sinister family. We have arrived at the house of the Steins. The mystery to my life lies here, and it was MysterE that would unravel it for me.

At first, the Steins seemed nice. Friendly. Caring. That's what they wanted us and the state to see. That they were sane and righteous people and not sadistic maniacal illusionists. They made a bunch of string and mirrors and acted like they would treat us like their own children.

They put their youngest son in the loft and gave my brother and me his room. We had our expectations set for things to become normal for once. But we were naive. Things from there on out would be far from typical.

The dark clouds soon set in and molest us mentally and physically. Not too long after we moved in, the veil started to come down, probably within the first two months. When the state circus left town, the real show began. The earliest memory I have was of Robin, the foster mother, forcing me to eat until I vomited. There was a party going on outside on a Sunday. Robin told me to sit on the grass while she got me some food.

She brought back a portion size for someone who weighs five hundred pounds. She forced me to eat the whole thing. Every attempt I made at stopping, she would be there to make sure I ate every last bite. Later on that night, I vomited all over my bed and floor. Robin became furious and had my brother, and I give her youngest son Benny his bedroom back and put us in the loft.

But instead of using the bed in there, she had us share the hard wooden curved seat bench. She forced me to sleep in the fetal position while she had my brother keep his legs straight out, both of us touching feet. She decided that we should sleep without blankets and pillows. We were situated to sleep this way every night for quite some time until she decided to put my brother Boruch in the loft bed that had been sitting there the entire time. I still had to sleep on the bench in the fetal position. I guess for shits and giggles.

Eventually, she would have Boruch sleep in the other bed in Benny's room and put me on the bed in the loft. At first, I was supposed to sleep on my belly with my yarmulke smothering my face. It was hard to breathe, but I would take my face out of it to replenish my oxygen levels when she would go to sleep.

One night I saw her twelve-year-old son Ari sit on my bed in the loft. His dirty paws were fastened onto my innocent five-year-old brother's arms, shaking him and demonically yelling at him. He commanded him to kiss him on the lips. My brother, crying, eventually did what he was told. He must have been scared. I was frightened and didn't know what to do.

Ari then dragged my brother Boruch into his room. Ari was now shouting at him to touch his penis. My brother was crying even louder. No one was doing anything. No one. I went in there, and I got caught in his tentacles.

He started to force me to touch his penis too. It didn't end there. There were nights I was sleeping in my bed in the loft when he would jump on top of me. A freakishly tall and chubby twelve-year-old. It was painful. It was unwanted. And he was going to have his way with me because he could. He would start with kissing, but quickly it went elsewhere.

The loft was in an open area. I don't know why so much secretive stuff would often happen in the open. But then again, the whole family was twisted. Benny, their youngest son, was no innocent six-year-old. He may have been the sexual victim of both of his older brothers. However, he would use what he learned from them to try and control me, both sexually and materially.

He threatened to tell his mother fabrications about me to get me in trouble and kicked out of their home if I didn't do what he asked me to do. At the age of six, he had a mind of a thirty-five-year-old pedophile. He knew how to manipulate his prey to do what he wanted. Luckily we got caught. Or I should say I got caught with my hands down his bathing suit in the jacuzzi.

I did what he asked me to do, and his mother came over and saw me stroking him. Why did she keep me after that? Oh, that's right. The money. The state gave her funds meant to be used for us but instead would be used for her own family. This was only the cream on top of the cake. There are layers deep that we have not reached yet in this story. But don't worry. It will happily drive us through the dark route to the loft at the hippy farm. I promise you. We just have to jump through a few more rabbit holes first to get there.

The jacuzzi was a boiling point for Robin and my relationship. She would put me through torture and slavery to cool what was left in her pot. When she wasn't starving me for several days, she was force-feeding me until I vomited. This became a pattern. There was even one point where I thought she was poisoning me. It tasted like it.

Her anger boiled over to the community, where she would use me as a prop of amusement. She would spread lies around so people would treat me differently. She would have me take my yarmulke off and go up to people and tell them that I'm not Jewish.

Perhaps that was her way of feeling better about herself for not being born Jewish. And if that wasn't enough, she would tell people, including adults who befriended me, that I am a liar or this, or that, just to watch them treat me as an outcast. And while all the other kids would get to play outside, I had to help cut wood on an empty stomach and without my yarmulke to prove that I was not a Jew.

I remember one cold night, I was in my underwear. It must have been four or five in the morning on a school day when she woke me up, ripped me out of bed, threw me outside in the freezing cold, and locked the door on me until it was time for everyone else to wake up. I would get a bag of old lettuce for breakfast and lunch, while my brother would get cookies and a yummy-looking lunch.

At some point in my labyrinth, I lost sight of the outside world, and the reality of the path in front of me became more and more apparent that there was no good or just life. That was only in the movies. What kid wipes their own shit all over the bathroom wall to get their foster brother in trouble? Ok, a rivalrous kid. That is normal in this situation. But not shit staining an entire room. Yeah, I bet you never saw that in a movie.

I quickly became skin and bones and resembled death. Within a year, by age 8, I was down to forty-five pounds. A raw potato was thrown at me in the loft every three days while doing homework. That was my meal for the next three days. If I was lucky, I would get a bag of old lettuce in between.

I became a thief. Stealing from other kids' lunch boxes in school. There was suspicion and even a couple of close calls, but I became a pro at survival. One day, my best friend, Justin Lisak, came up to me in the lunchroom, and he gave me his pizza crusts to eat.

Tammy, his wife, over 20 years later, would joke about how he only gave me the crusts and not any actual pizza. But to me, the gesture of someone caring was all that meant anything to me.

That act of kindness didn't go unnoticed. The school principal put two and two together and talked with me later in her office. Not too long after that conversation, I was taken out of the Stein's home and placed into foster care with my now-adopted parents. My other siblings stayed after I was taken out for quite some time, but eventually, they were taken out also.

I was severely traumatized for years after. I eventually came to terms with what happened within a year, mainly through an interpretation of a specific evolving dream that I would have almost every night for a while. It would start with me running from a monster that I could not see clearly. The harder I tried to run, the deeper I would sink into the ground. And just before the bogeyman could get me, I'd wake up. Each time these dreams would occur, I would push myself even harder to run than the last time.

Eventually, I would gain enough momentum to ascend from the swallowing grounds and run above it. After so many of these dreams, I could flap my arms and fly away. One day, I didn't need to flap my arms anymore, and I would just will myself to fly where I wanted to go. At this point, outside of my dreams, I realized I had regained control of my life. Through the evolution of my dreams, I was able to become free. I never wanted to be a slave to anyone again.

That's why when I married Heather, I should have known better. Especially days just before our wedding. She sent me a meme with a stick figure woman holding one arm out and down. There was another stick figure of a man kneeling, head down, with his arm extended up towards the stick figured woman holding out a dollar bill. there was a caption saying, "The symbol for marriage." That was literally what defined our marriage, and that should have been the red flag to break it all off. But familiarity disguised itself as genuineness, and before I knew it, I was engulfed back into the depths of slavery. This time around, it was of my own doing.

I married that monster, and she became my center. So when the divorce struck, that which was not the center of my life, past, present, and future, became subordinate to the missing center. I felt a gaping hole at the center of my universe. No matter what I tried to fill it up with, I still felt empty. Nevertheless, I would not give up trying to fill it.

I bought a kiteboard to learn how to control nature as I did in my dreams, but I haven't caught much of it due to lack of wind most of the year and taking the time to rebuild myself. I have thought about selling it. I never really got to use it much. It may not have served its purpose entirely, but it did lead me in the right direction to find what was needed to fill my internal black hole. It was at the center of my life where Heather once was that held the residual memory.

I thought I had let the ghost of her and I drift off into the ocean after the fairy tale divorce. But really, that was just a layer. I had to revisit the ghost itself and travel to the center of my mind to face it there.

And there it was. The entrance to the River House labyrinth. It was a sunny Monday afternoon. The acid just kicked in. I finally decided to do it. At first, I thought it was just some hippity dippity bullshit like their astrological interests. But I am open-minded, and I figured It would be an excellent adventure while on my acid trip. Miranda told me to pick up one of the rocks lying near the entrance and said I would know exactly which one to pick up. At first, I didn't know what she meant by that.

Was it just unintentionally placed rocks near the entrance or intentionally placed stones where my spirit would know which one to choose? Standing at the entry, I realized it was the latter. They were all heart-shaped rocks. Beautiful and intentionally selected.

I looked at each heart-shaped rock lying in front of the entrance to MysterE's labyrinth. I chose the one painted blue on one side and red on the other. It spoke the loudest to me out of any others and carried it with me into the labyrinth. My feet were bare naked, and my mind was deeply opened. The path in front of me had locusts jump over my feet. Other critters and creatures were passing by my feet too. I could have stopped (and it did cross my mind), but it was at that moment that I began to realize what the labyrinth represents: Life.

There will always be danger jumping out around you as you walk forward in life, but the key is to keep walking. Otherwise, you're going to die standing still. So I continued to walk. The further along I walked, the deeper in purpose I began to see for the labyrinth. By the time I reached the center, I was overwhelmed with emotions. It was like I had reached a pivotal point in my life, and the most painful memory was about to be put to rest. In front of me, I saw a rock-circled space where people put gifts like bracelets on top of it.

I checked my pockets to see what I had to give, but all I could find were body wipe packets that were my only source of a shower on this trip. I had nothing substantial to offer other than my heavy heart. Then it dawned upon me to place the heavy heart-shaped rock that I had been carrying this whole time on the journey through the labyrinth down on the platform there where all the other little gifts were at.

After I laid my heavy heart to rest, I stood up and noticed the red and blue paint residue all over my hands. I knew it was time to walk away from it, only carrying the residue from that memory. The memory that held open the gaping hole inside me was now beginning to close. Still, I knew that it would never close completely. This memory would be close to me at certain corners of my life (my labyrinth) and further away in other parts of my walk.

By the time I exited the labyrinth, I was a new man. All of a sudden, all of my problems seemed trivial. The car accident and lawsuit against me, the divorce, even the Steins. It seemed like small steps to climb towards something extraordinary: the man I ought to be. But the man I ought to be was about to face the man I ought not to be but should learn from. The man behind all of the madness that brought me my serenity, MysterE.

Like Robin, he had a long ponytail with dark and sinister facial features, but you could tell that there was pain behind it. Like Robin with her woodcraft business 'Just For The Mitzvah' masquerade, you could see the pain transferred over into his artwork. He had cultured his farm for others to come and experience. People like me. Subconsciously, When I was planning my second trip to Colorado, their page on Airbnb must have spoken deeper to me than I initially realized.

Looking back at this experience, I now see that the connection through the sight of his artwork was from a shared pain that only comes from the loss of a loved one. He was a divorcee also, and his artwork filled his center.

Everyone that visited his art farm shared some form of this pain with him, whether they knew his story or not. Not all were divorcees. Some either lost a significant other, were getting over someone, or were just a random hippy exchanging physical labor services for food, shelter, and weed. Even they came because they knew that indescribable pain.

The tone of it all was finally starting to manifest after I exited the labyrinth. It all became purple. I felt purple, I saw purple, I tasted purple, I smelled purple, and I could hear purple. It was whistling through the trees, and the leaves were expressed through purple.

Why purple?

One guest gave me the best explanation. Blue and red make purple, and my acid trip must have turned purple after leaving the labyrinth. It was beautifully purple and refreshing. An expression of the paradox of reality. I decided to bathe in the sun on the bridge over the river where I first noticed the purpleness. I never knew colors could have so much depth.

Whichever filters in my mind were down, I was able to experience this color in a way that I could never experience in a typical setting. It was purple that got me to finally see the artwork over the river for the beautiful expression it really was. I was bedazzled. I appreciated the science behind the art. I finally understood the madness behind it all. And for the first time, I genuinely connected to someone through the labor of their creations.

I sat there for quite some time, bathing in the sun as it hit not only me but the orbiting pieces of MysterE's river madness. The essence of the art wasn't necessarily the objects themselves but in the formation of their shadows over the river itself that spun in a coordinated manner. I sat there mesmerized by my newfound appreciation for art. Real art. Not the bland dysfunctional artwork in the overly priced art galleries.

This was truly breathtaking. So much to the point, it was starting to overwhelm me. It was at that point I realized I was tachycardic. My heart was racing faster than a racehorse. I was sweating like I had just gotten out of the shower.

Something was wrong. My heart wouldn't slow down. Then, I realized that it wasn't the artwork that was overwhelming me. It was the sun. That's when it hit me. I'm not in Kansas anymore. Florida heat is wet. This hippy farm is set over a river, but the environment felt very dry.

I was starting to overheat, and I didn't even notice for quite some time. I became clammy and light-headed, and I felt I would lose consciousness. I was about to have a heat stroke unless I did something about it then. I went to the freezer to grab one of the watermelon icicle bars I bought for my acid trip. Within twenty seconds of contact with my overheating head, it had completely melted away in noticeable steam. That's how hot my body was.

There was strong steam at the point of contact being produced. After several watermelon icicles completely melting and not working, I realized I needed something with more surface space. I thought the chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream container would work. It, too, had melted entirely within a minute of holding it to my head, neck, and armpits. I have never seen my body produce steam at the point of contact with something cold.

My heart was still racing. I was sweating profusely even though I was inside and away from the sun. Miranda saw my failed attempts to cool myself off lying on the counter. She suggested that I put my feet in the ice-cold river. She said that she read somewhere that the best way to cool your body down is through your feet. I decided to listen to her. She didn't seem as cooky anymore after the walk through the labyrinth.

I situated myself on the corner of the river and the bridge. I placed my feet in the icy river, and I could feel my whole body ease within a minute. My heart rate decreased, and I could also feel my skin cool off. It was right around that time that I saw MysterE turn on the hose. He walked to the temple near the river, behind and to the left, a few feet away from me.

I noticed he shot me a look. It was a familiar look that I had only seen on one other person before: Robin Stein. It was the look she would give before executing a malicious act against me.

I couldn't help but look over my shoulder to see what he was doing. He was cleaning the temple floor as he would shoot several glances over at me, often giving a smug smile. And then he did it. He did what I thought he would do and aimed the hose at me.

"Hey!" I shouted.

He looked up at me with a fake smile and said, "oops. I didn't see you there. Get out of the way, and you won't get hit again."

He saw me. How could he not? I was a few feet away from him, and he looked over at me several times. I decided to get up and move out of his way. As I walked away from him, he shot me Joker's smile and acted like he was about to reshoot me with the water hose.

I just gave him a blank stare to not give him what he was looking for. He then brushed it off as a joke. I continued to walk away and do something else. But he followed me and tried out other pranks like running over my feet with his wheelbarrow or hiding my shoes from me.

It was the hiding of the shoes that cut the deepest.

It was something Robin would do to torture me. She would hide something like a pair of shoes, whether mine or someone else's, that she would accuse me of stealing. Robin would pointlessly have me spend from morning until it got dark out searching for something she was hiding the whole time. Her motivation was for shits and giggles.

This time around, I found them within ten minutes, but my purple trip was starting to become a darker purple by then. MysterE had it out for me. It seemed like he would go out of his way all evening to act as if I was in his way. I decided to not cave in and moved each time. But the shoe thing was starting to hook itself to me. Why would he do that? Obviously, for shits and giggles.

I couldn't give him the satisfaction of power over me. No. That is precisely what he, like Robin and Ari, was looking for. Power.

Power over what they perceive to be inferior to them. I may be short, and I may be blemished, but I am not a footstool. So I played it cool.

I lit a spliff in my mouth and sat on the rocking chair near the house entrance. As I was rocking back and forth, smoking my joint, Miranda came outside to offer me her homemade iced tea. I think she could tell something was up, and the way she talked to me while asking if I wanted any was so nurturing that when she went back inside, I started to cry. How could such a wonderful person be with such a monster?

He started to walk towards the entrance of the house. I quickly dried my tears and acted calmly. I had one leg on the bottom of the rocking chair, and the other one placed out in an uncaring fashion as I looked into space and blew smoke out of my nose. As he came up to me, he stopped, stared, smiled, and said, "You sure know how to keep your cool. I admire that."

I nodded at him, and then he walked inside. He must have talked to Miranda after that because minutes later, he came back outside just to tell me that he appreciated me visiting their farm.

This was a turning point for me. Ever since I left the Steins, I have always been on the defensive. But what if I never really had to be on the defensive? What if I just don't give power to people dealing with pain and injury and just flow like a moving river, coursing at my internal pace around the rocks, legs, and bridges? We inevitably encounter resistance, but that shouldn't stop our flow. It should be used to give definition to it. It should be used to express the beauty in our dance along the way. I had to have this dance with MysterE. Was he part of some grander scheme, or did I just happen to, by chance, dance with my muse?

When I exited MysterE's garden labyrinth, I was born into a new one. Since then, I have slowly but indeed learned more about how to go with the flow. I have to at this point for my sanity. I would not have survived 2020 if it were not for learning to dance with it at the River House.

I just hope that my heavy heart can stay there where it belongs. Where I left it. In the past. All that matters now is what I do from here on out. Do I play it cool when facing such adversity? Or do I do what I always do and react?

It seems that responding is a very delicate art that not everyone recognizes as a delicate art. I have fallen short of realizing its power, and from time to time, I still do. So maybe the lesson here is to be like a moving river that draws out the beauty from resistance to it as it flows along its path.

# Chapter 8: FACING FEAR

Who was it? Who was I running from in my nightmares as a child? I know I called it a monster, but that still is a vague identification. Who is it? Why was I running from it? The most straightforward answer is Robin Stein, the foster mother with the fucked up wealthy family. But the monster symbolizes more than just Robin. It is a lesson for all time. The monster represents what I fear, and I ran because I felt in danger.

But what if I
wasn't in danger? What if I just stopped running? Would the "monster" try and help me out from the sinking ground? Eventually, the monster evolved into flying Jesus, and by then, I was able to face him. He was not trying to help me out. He was flying after me.

We could go down the rabbit hole and ask what if he was just chasing me down to give me a gift. I guess that is the good thing about dreams. Your feelings are correct. The monster is your imagination, and you control its motivations. The motivation for the monster/Jesus was to hurt me. When I learned to fly, I was able to face my fears.

I had no other choice but to face my fears throughout my years if I wanted to live. From the mundane to the extraordinary, I had little opportunity to shove my problems aside and pretend that they did not exist.

I fear not facing fear because life would have passed by me, and I would have nothing to show. I fear that. It's the reason after falling off of a mountain in October 2019, as soon as my arm was fully healed, I went back and climbed those mountains. It is innate in me to better myself, and the only way to do so is by facing the fears that hold my life captive. This is the power that the dreams/nightmares had on my psyche. It rewired me to become a superman. To head back to Ouray and try again, knowing I could fall off another mountain and die.

I don't ever recall having nightmares or dreams like these. Of all I have had, these ones were the most meaningful. They had the most effect on my life, and the monsters of today look more human because of them.

**March 13th, 2018, at 4:30 p.m.:**
I'm sure I put in my eight hours. I can leave work. I clock out and get in my Prius. I've been meaning to replace the old thing. But I would have preferred to have saved some money. Plus, it still works. That was my mentality before a lady who was texting and not paying attention hit my car with her car. I knew this wasn't good, but I didn't think it would be a nightmare for the next two years.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, this accident snowballed into a behemoth. Still, I beat the system and was free from all civil charges with focus, determination, and eventually getting some legal guidance to get me past the finish line. Time became a powerful friend to me. It also proved there is power in the uncertainty of any given situation. Anything could happen, and you either work with it or don't. But one thing is for sure, if you never try, you will never know. So if you jump into uncertain waters, you may die, yes, or just end up living.

The car crash was the push to get me to buy my booger-looking car. It got me to drive up the east coast to hike while smoking and tripping on shrooms, visiting family and friends, and celebrating 4/20 in 2019 with my cousin in Massachusetts, where I bought a buttload of weed. It got me to learn the patience I needed to stand up to the insurance companies, and it's what ultimately got me past Heather to lead the life that I want to create.

It all was always so unpredictable what would happen. Scary even at times. And that's why I needed Ouray. I needed to be in complete isolation from time to time to conquer the unpredictable and move on to the next stage of my constantly shedding existence.

After getting the east coast hike and the novelty of multi-state marijuana hopping out of my system, I decided to revisit Ouray in October 2019. I miscalculated the distance on a new path I took up a mountain. I should have known what I was climbing up was not an actual path to hike on. It first started as big rocks, much bigger than myself. Eventually, the stones grew smaller and more marble-like towards the top of a waterfall I climbed up.

As soon as I got to the top of the waterfall, I slipped and slid down the mountain. My shoulder popped out of its socket and dislocated my arm. I have dislocated this arm twice before, but I could not pop it back in myself this time. It was that bad.

I had no phone reception nor any internet, which was the whole point of me being out there in the first place, but at that moment, I needed it. No one could hear me cry for help. So I kept on climbing down with one arm. Each step was more painful than the step before. The pain grew exponentially with each passing moment. The worst pain I have felt in my entire life.

The numbness started to take hold in different arm and hand areas. Much of the way down was not walkable if I wanted to live. So I had to slide down via my ass. I had to jump from an unstable boulder to continue off the mountain at one point. It was loose, and as soon as I stepped off it, it started to roll towards me. The boulder would have crushed me if I didn't act quickly and jump another agonizing step.

I finally found an alternative route off the mountain. I took the uncertain path, but it also looked like it would be easier to handle than going back the way I came, which was made up of humongous rocks to climb down from with one arm only. I finally made it back to Million Dollar Mile Road.

The walk to my car would be a good five to ten minutes. The pain was getting worse, and I almost felt like fainting. I then noticed an RV camper coming my way. I waved my working arm up in the air for help.

I saw it on their faces that they didn't want to stop, but they could see the pain written on my face. There was no way to ignore that. And they could see a detached arm hanging off as if already a phantom limb.

They hesitantly stopped to see if I was ok. The guy eventually developed enough guilt not to help me but to follow me as I was walking to find my car and drive myself to the hospital. He noticed I couldn't get in the driver's side, let alone be able to drive down the winding road back into town. I would fall off the mountain's edge before seeing the entrance into Ouray. So the man told his wife to follow him and me back into town with their RV.

The forty-five-minute drive into town was unbearable. But the man did try to get my mind off the pain. He asked me what my name was. He sounded like a southerner, and for the first time in my entire life, I was afraid to tell someone my name. I was uncertain whether he would turn on me if he found out I come from a Jewish background. I've dealt with anti-Semitism throughout my life. I even remember why I stopped wearing my yarmulke and Tzitzis (religious strings on a garment) in the first place. Some kid from 7th grade threatened to blow up my synagogue.

"My name is Chaim," I said to the man.

"Is that like a Jewish name or somethin'?" queried the southern man.

There was a pause for a good few seconds. Thanks to Trump, I know there is a growing sentiment to be open about bigotry these days, but should I have more faith than that in humans? Should I take the chance with my life?

"Yes, I'm sort of Jewish. Not anymore, though." I tried to downplay it, even though I knew it would not make a difference.

I forgot what his response was. I mean, can you blame me? I was in an intensifying state of pain. But I remember feeling assured that he was a good man and would not hurt me after all.

We finally got to the paramedic station in Ouray, where they took a scissor and cut open my favorite flannel shirt and thermal shirt to get to my injured arm. The kind couple stayed with me until the ambulance was ready to drive off. They waved goodbye and said to get better.

Their warmth stayed with me for the duration of the trip as the Fentanyl ran through my veins. I was sure this would be the most expensive ride of my life. For now, I let the opiate run its course.

The paramedic did a number on my arm to get me high, but I liked her. Besides, the pain was so bad that I didn't feel her ripping up my other arm like a samurai sword to a cloth. I just heard a lot of "uh ohs" and whatnot.

An hour later, we finally got to the hospital, where they put me under Propofol, which was also used to loosen up my muscles so they could slide my bone back into place. They were nice enough to get me an uber for free to drive one other person and me back to where we needed to go.

The Uber driver and I clicked. We had at least a good hour's drive back to Ouray. He, too, was a divorced man, and we both knew of the uncertainty of life. After signing it, we both knew what that piece of paper did to our minds. It made a commitment to another person more meaningful because it is all tied to the risk of losing all our possessions.

Being domestic partners doesn't carry that risk, and therefore when it ends, it doesn't fall as hard on your psyche. We both also learned what the garbage to the divorce would mean for future relationships. It is a powerful force that changes even the strongest of people. But it was a force to be reckoned with. That is what it means to live after moving on.

Suffice to say, the rest of my hiking trip was canceled. I was stuck in the confines of the cabin for the next week until I left to head back to Denver - A dangerous drive, as you will remember from earlier chapters. But what choice did I have? I had no one to help me get back home but myself.

My last two days in Colorado were spent in a hostel in Silverthorne, Colorado, where I mostly just relaxed and got high to the view of some magnificent monster-looking mountains. Too bad I won't be able to climb them, but there was a lovely fireplace inside to enjoy their view. I nursed myself back to health enough to drive back to Denver.

I promised myself I'd try that international cereal place out this time around. I have wanted to try it ever since I first
came to Colorado. I finally had the time to try it out. I wasn't at all impressed. They had no international cereal left when I got there, and the only ones left were ones I could have gotten at Walmart for an eighth of the cost. But they had gummy worms and peanut buttermilk, so I bought a bowl.

As soon as I was done, I planned to try and smoke as much of my weed as I could because I couldn't take any back to Florida. I gave the joints I had left to the Enterprise employee helping me get my luggage out of the rental car. He was grateful, and we became Facebook friends.

I eventually got home to Florida, back to my lovely non-beach ghetto mistake of a choice apartment. I had a plan. It started a year ago in 2018, when I finally answered the question of who am I? A creator. If I had to identify what makes me who I am, it would be that one word. A creator.

To take control of my destiny, I have to be my own boss. And before leaving to visit Ouray in October 2019, I realized just how expendable I was to the medical company I worked for as a medical Coder and Reviewer.

After moving from the beach and back inland, the office that I was planted in had an office administrator, Caroline, who had a severe power trip going to her head. It wasn't just with me. However, I had special treatment from her power trip because I was the only male in the office. The turnover rate was high, but luckily she was not my supervisor.

I had a big phony supervisor who talked a big game but usually had my back. And we were friends too. Anyways, there was growing tension between the office administrator and me. She would get upset because I would follow her instructions regarding entering the building in the morning. However, I somehow wasn't listening to her mandates because I came the earliest I was allowed to come.

Crazy, right?

I knew she would make my day hard, so I tried to ease things by apologizing if I misunderstood her. She falsely turned it into me yelling and threatening her and somehow used that to subtly threaten me, "I'm sure Hughes (my boss) wouldn't like to know that you take more than five minutes to have your coffee." Weird.

Since then, she went out of her way to either tell me how to do my job or attempt to get me to react a certain way. On the final event, it had to do with a conversation I had with the physician's assistant that she just happened to overhear. There was a patient review missing, and according to the system, it was because the patient was added on at the last minute, and I was never told about it. The rule between my boss and the office administrator was that I needed at least three days advance notice of a patient add-on.

This particular patient was added just minutes before the office closed when I had already handed in my reviews. So, Caroline, the office administrator, came to my office and asked me to look up precisely the time the patient was added. I gave her the exact time, and she took the opportunity to scold me, blaming me for it not getting done, even though my boss told her I needed to be informed about a patient add-on. I believe my response was calm and measured, being as there wasn't an email record that informed me of an add-on. But according to her, I was being aggressive and loud.

So she called my boss and, within a half-hour, he was there and had me go to the conference room with her and him. He took her side and ended the meeting by telling me to "get up, walk over to your desk, sit down, get back to work, and never do this again, because the next time, I won't be able to protect your job."

Months later, Hughes admitted that he knew I didn't do anything wrong but that he had to make Caroline believe that he took control of the situation to make her happy. By then, I already knew I was expendable and needed a path toward becoming my own boss. After my October 2019 trip to Colorado, I knew that I would get started in a real estate course. If I were to be successful with that, I could quit my day job, set my schedule, and be my own boss.

Roughly a month after I got back from my 2019 Ouray trip, my boss got fired. Three months after that, Caroline quit. Talk about irony. I was still working there. I got licensed by the state as a real estate agent precisely one week before the car crashers team's deadline had to try and get me to slip and say those magical words.

The months after my 2019 trip to Ouray were spent in physical therapy, orthopedic appointments, and within the confines of my own home to focus on my real estate studies. I barely even went to the gym. As a result, I gained some weight. And I had a $6000 bill to pay, which I diplomatically brought down to less than $4000 from all the different companies I owed money to. Unlike the lady who hit me with her car, I was willing to pay this off, and I did.

While I am and will always be a work in progress, overall, I think I handled everything after Heather quite well on my own. Between dealing with a power-tripping administrator and the medical bills from my dislocated shoulder, AFNI, the company attempting to collect on behalf of the insurance company of the woman who smashed her car into mine while texting, started their harassment parade again.

The clock was running out, and they were perspiring desperateness. I met up with my new lawyer friend after Progressive decided they had enough of me being a thorn in their side. They settled. Albeit small, nevertheless, the principle was satisfied. Half the battle had been won, and time was not being kind to the other multi-dimensional chess players left in the game. As time was reaching closer to the end, I became ever more certain that AFNI had accepted their position on the chessboard.

And then March 14th, 2020 hit, the second anniversary marking the end of an era in which any legal course could be taken against me. Persistence and creativity paid off in the end by facing my fears. I took a step closer to the bridge to the superman.

# Chapter 9: The Power of Uncertainty

Now that the car accident was entirely behind me, new challenges lay ahead. The year was 2020. President Trump almost started world war three to distract everyone from his impeachment. I don't know how much if at all, it helped to distract, but it sure started the new decade with a roar. And if that were not enough, after getting acquitted by the corrupted senate, he went on a crime spree to rub it in everyone's faces. His supporters loved it and ate every minute of it up.

Then you had the primaries. Oh boy, how things change instantly. My boy at the time, Bernie Sanders, was on a roll with the debates and polls. He was the front runner, and even all of his haters admitted to it also. I was excited about the future. I had a newfound hope in me that slowly churned throughout 2019. I was reluctant, but I knew my boy was still solid. I knew he had one fight left in him. And I was confident that he was going to win the presidential nomination.

Oh, how naive I was.

Things took a turn on the first night of the race with the Iowa caucuses. Presidential hopeful Mayor Pete Buttigieg had business ties to the vote-counting app, which screwed up the actual count in favor of Buttigieg conveniently. It was too late by the time they figured the damn thing out. The damage was done. Even though Bernie won, the race was already on to New Hampshire, and many, if not most, people in the country thought Buttigieg won, giving him some "electability" points. Bernie started to reclaim his front-runner status in the following states.

This was not pleasing the Democrat party, and so they had the rest of the presidential contenders drop out immediately and endorse Joe Biden after he won South Carolina. It was sad to see all the candidates I grew to really like drop out like flies to crush Sanders's campaign for a neoliberal hack who was part of the very reason that got Trump elected in the first place.

The nerve the Democrat party had to top it off with voter suppression in key states like Texas. The primaries were stolen from Bernie, and I was distraught. And to make things worse, many Democrats tried to shame me into voting for Biden if he wins the nomination. There was just too much corruption and cheating going on, and my vote was on principles, not on any particular candidate, including Bernie. I was fed up with the hypocrisy from both sides, and frankly, I was starting to see a darker and more sinister pattern than I initially imagined.

Then the pandemic hit the world and shut everything down. It changed everything overnight.

The states were forced to lock everything down, including voting places. With 27 states left to vote, Bernie Sanders only being 300 delegates behind Joe Biden, and Joe Biden needing at least 700 delegates to call the race off, Bernie decided to prematurely drop out.

I was shocked. All that momentum was gone, just like that. And then Bernie had the nerve to quickly endorse the enemy! Was his whole movement just a joke? It sure felt like it at that moment. It was then that I lost all faith in politics and realized it was never going to change.

Those in control will do anything to keep it, and Bernie Sanders was just a machine attempting to program a new wave of people into the establishment. How else do you explain such a betrayal? Or maybe he just was weaker than I thought. Perhaps he lost it over the years. Maybe he just became a WAP - a Weak Ass Pussy.

At this point, it does not matter. It is out of my reach to do anything. But I knew one thing. I wasn't going to vote blue no matter who just because my boy said to. And our vote means shit at this point, so I am not going to waste my time and energy voting for something that I am against.

It seemed like every month, a new epic problem was occurring. In April 2020, what the media labeled "Murder Hornets" migrated from Asia to the United States. And then, just a day before May, military-looking civilians with guns stormed the state capital of Michigan and staged what seemed like a week-long protest.

Then…. Wait for it….a cop kills a black guy with his knee over his neck for eight minutes, and the entire world protested and looted and rioted together for one man who was propped up as a symbol for the underdog. The world went mad, more mad than usual. Even the most rational people I knew were starting to go bonkers because of the pandemic. The world was changing quicker than I changed my underwear.

Overall, I was ok throughout the lockdown. I was just a bit down because I planned to celebrate passing my real estate state exam on the first attempt. With only a week to beat the clock before they completely locked the country down, I had everything ready for my road trip to Ouray. I had it all planned out. It felt so right. I would end my memoir with this trip across the country to Ouray, racing against the pandemic clock while protecting myself from sick people. I had latex gloves and a mask and was ready to adventure across the apocalyptic planes of America.

It just made sense. My war with the insurance companies triggered indirectly by my ex-wife was over. Ouray was the first place I went when I decided to take an inward journey to find myself again. And it was the anchor for everything that happened within the three years that this book is based around. It would have been a nice ending to just leave it at my road trip to Ouray to celebrate the man I have become. But with a twist of luck, a twist to the story naturally arose.

One week before my trip, I got an email from Nova and Steve. They wrote that even though their town was safe from any cases, the state of Colorado had issued a lockdown. Therefore, my trip was postponed.

One month. I would have to wait for one month.

But it did open up an opportunity to find a real estate office early. So I did some hunting before Florida went on total lockdown and ended up with one of the largest real estate firms. I decided to keep my day job as a medical coder and reviewer for now until things kicked off with Real Estate.

I figured maybe I'd stay with them for a year and then give them the boot, depending. But the pandemic put things into perspective for me. Millions of people were out of work due to the lockdown, and I was allowed to work from home. Many people in real estate had to file for unemployment. And even though the real estate market is adaptable enough to work virtually, an inevitable hit was taken.

Almost a month later, my rescheduled road trip was coming up when I got another email from Nova and Steve that even though Colorado was reopening, the cluster counties, of which they are a part, would remain under lockdown for another two weeks. I had no choice but to reschedule again for May 15th.

Within that period, my new and first broker Colleen gave me a fantastic idea that I never would have had the opportunity if I had not had to reschedule Ouray twice. It turns out that Colorado has a lot of people wanting to move to the Sunshine state. I could make a personal letter or introduce myself in person to establish a referral network, the share being thirty-five percent.

I was like a dog held back by a leash, ready to run for the backyard when the master let me. Five p.m. hit on May 15th, and I was prepared to fly out the door. It took me a little longer to pack, so I left by five-thirty. I got in my rental SUV, turned on my Youtube playlist for the road trip, and went on my way to Ouray.

It took me a little over a day to get to Ouray. It was almost supernatural how I got there. With less than three hours of sleep, I finally got up through the butthole of Colorado. I could feel that Chipotle burrito ready to unload from me. Big mistake having it the night before. I was on peanut butter sandwiches the whole trip and could have gotten famous Texan Tacos. However, I was on a mission to get to Colorado, so I ended up with a Chipotle burrito.

My brother sounded frustrated that I drove all the way to Texas just to have a Chipotle burrito when I could have gotten that in Florida. He's right. I should have. I thought about it, but in the end, I was hungry, and I was itching to go to Ouray.

The sun was not out yet, but the light was creeping in. I had my painter's bucket porta-potty, and I just needed an overview that would provide plenty of room for my car on the side of the road and a beautiful view of the sun rising over the misty morning mountains. I could not hold it any longer.

I was about to explode in my pants. I found a tiny little space on the side of the road and pulled over. I knew I was too close to the road and was taking a chance for a driver not paying attention to slightly veer off the road a little and hit me. But when nature calls, well, nature calls. At least the sun was out enough for me to do my business.

I got back on the road and drove. I can't believe I made a trip that was initially supposed to take three days into a day and a half. But all I had was a week to get all of this done. Originally, I was granted two weeks, but working from home because of the pandemic tied my company's hands behind their backs, and they only allowed me a week.

I didn't complain. How could I? They made sure that I could still have a job and stay safe. I have a friend who lost a job because of the pandemic. And I know others who are suffering financially because of it. I am grateful.

That doesn't change that I'm still expendable to them and need to do my own thing. I had been with the company for over seven years when I got my first job in real estate. If it were not for them, at least the original company, I would not be where I am today. With everything that happened during my time there, it still was a vehicle for the betterment of my character.

Anyways, I got hit by a rock this time around in Ouray. Small, albeit. And I almost fell a few times off that mountain. The day before that, I fell in an almost similar position to when I fell the last time I was there and dislocated my shoulder.

I definitely had post-traumatic stress disorder or at least coming to Ouray, and climbing mountains again brought a new fear. But I faced each thing and went on forward.

I even gathered the courage to parkour over fallen trees with my hands, hiking sticks, or both my hands and hiking sticks. And I did all of that with a big hiking backpack I have had since my summer camping days as a teenager. I don't believe one can be considered living if you don't face your fears. I also learned to be more adjustable with risk. It may have saved my life a couple of times. Plus, do I want to pay another $4000 medical bill? These events were character builders.

When it was time to leave Colorado, I gave a couple more real estate referrals before purchasing $400 of the best weed I have had in a while. I barely made it through Kansas before I was put in handcuffs and forced to dump nearly $400 in weed on the side of the road by one of the most pleasant officers I have ever met. Upon the handcuffs being taken off, I was given no ticket, no arrest, and no record. All I had to do was stop at the next exit and throw away my paraphernalia.

About twenty minutes later, another cop pulled me over and said he smelled weed in my rental SUV. I was lucky enough that he finally could contact the previous officer, who did me a solid. This next officer let me off with a written warning, and I was on my way back to Florida, nearly $400 short of weed.

At least I was not put in prison nor had to forfeit my real estate and medical coding/reviewing future. That incident alone could have gotten my license revoked before even selling my first property! Oh yeah, I would have also lost my coding and reviewing job.

I was traumatized to the point where I didn't smoke for a whole week. And then my friends wanted to cheer me up, smoked me out, and surprised me with a little gift. I got high with some help from my friends, and the trauma was lifted.

A couple of weeks later, we were allowed to go back to the office to work. Things were different. The way we worked was unalike. Besides wearing masks and keeping social distance by having new workstations, our coding department meetings were completely digitized.

Doctor Martin (the doctor who got my foot in the door with the company over seven years ago) was a ghost at the office. Since becoming the company's medical director, she had to deal with a load of responsibilities that had her in other offices 99.99999% of the time. So my office was held down full-time by a physician's assistant and a new doctor to the company who saw our patients once a week.

Something was off. I could not put my finger on it. But I was able to put my eyes on it. Someone in corporate supposedly on accident added me to a virtual meeting that I was not supposed to attend. And what I saw was the foreshadowing for what was to come the following day.

By the time the attendees of this meeting had recognized my unwanted presence, the damage was already done. Jennifer, who I have known since I started with this company, was the temporary administrator of my office after Caroline's sudden and abrupt quitting act. She came to the back where my new workspace was and quietly told me to not tell anyone what I saw.

I didn't know what to think. From what I saw, this could affect me too. That day was my grandpa's ninety-eighth birthday party at Toojay's, where my mom told me that I should not worry. There is no way they will let their number one Coder and Reviewer go. How could they? I was part of a separate department from this office, and I just received the highest pay raise out of any coder in the company.

And then the moment came. Jennifer pulled all the staff in the office into the conference room. My heart was racing. It was about to thump out of my chest and run across the table.

Since our center is one of two centers within minutes of each other, they decided to merge our office with the other office. And by merging, they meant keeping the providers and laying off all the staff in my center.

I knew this day would eventually come. I just thought I would have been the one to quit before it happened. But to my benefit, I was granted an acceptable severance package to help me get my feet off the ground with real estate, which would last me until November. I decided to take one last vacation in Miami Beach in a little retro hotel run through Airbnb. It looked like something out of the 1980s Scarface movie. I had an ocean view from the room.

Once I settled in, I dropped the acid. I made a plan for this to be my last time before buckling down with real estate.

The day after my Miami vacation, I jumped in full-time with real estate. After one week, the broker who replaced the broker who brought me on board decided to let me go. It wasn't a good match anyway. I chose to work there precisely because of Colleen, the former broker. I liked her. This replacement broker was cold and mean. I felt like I was walking on eggshells with her during every interaction.

So when she let me go, the first person that I called was Colleen. She just got picked up by an up-and-coming independent RE/MAX office as a real estate coach, and she suggested I interview with them. So I did and ended up working with her again.

Real estate requires dedication, smarts, and creativity, all of which I brought seven days a week, about ten to fifteen hours a day. Then September came. I had several serious clients but no contracts signed. No deals closed. But I was persistent. I did what many Realtors don't do anymore, especially during the pandemic of 2020, which was door-knocking and flyer campaigns. That is how I stumbled upon an owner who was only looking to get refinanced, saw my ad tied to her doorknob with a rubber band, and contacted me the very next day.

After much time coordinating a plan that would work best for everyone, we finally met on Thursday, September 24th. But first, I was headed to a contract signing of a for sale by owner lead, ready to work with a realtor that I worked hard to convert.

Unfortunately, it didn't work out the way I wanted, and she and I ended amicably. After the unsuccessful meeting, I drove over to the other owner's home to meet with my client that I have been working with for the last couple of months. She and her family loved it, but the pool was too narrow for them. They had my hands tied behind my back when it came to their criteria, yet I still popped out several doves from my hat for them. This one was the best one up my sleeve.

It did not look like it was going to work out. I fell into a depression that night. I was ready to end it all. The uncertainty of whether I'll be able to make it past November was killing me. I felt powerless. Drained.

# Chapter 10: EXIT THE RABBIT HOLE

Where does it end? Is there even an exit? There has to be one. We all die eventually, so the way out is inevitable. November isn't for another month, and technically I do have a 401k saved up. The question is, what would I do with it assuming I take it out?

I could use it on one path to climb to the top of a mountain away from everyone, take a shitload of drugs, and fade away into the sunset. But then, I would never get a chance to watch another sunset. And since the forces of nature aren't working against me enough to take away my momentum, why waste my opportunity to experience the world that shaped me into its purpose of existence?

On another path, I can live by traveling in a truck and camper through the United States and Canada, but would I have enough money to last more than a year or two?

Is there a better idea?

Maybe working for a cruise ship that sails worldwide would make me feel whole. I might enjoy that and even make enough to still get high and climb the mountains of Ouray. But I would have to give up weed for long periods while traveling the seas. And I would still be working for someone else. I can't do that anymore. Not after everything I have been through.

I wanted to give up, but I was not ready to. There has to be something that speaks loud enough to my spirit. I'm sure it's out there waiting for me to hear, as all the other callings were waiting for me to listen to them.

I'm conflicted. What's better, death or life? It's not like I didn't try to live. I jumped into Real Estate full time when I was thrown in the trash by my former job. I put together a network and set up showings for all of my clients. However, time was running out. My severance package had only over a month left, and I didn't want to mooch off my parents. They taught me to stand on my own two feet.

The morning after the failed Real Estate transactions, I was stuck on my couch bed. I couldn't stand up. My head felt too heavy. How do I get up again? How do I move forward from this?

By itself, the previous evening doesn't seem like the end of the world, but after reading this book, it should be clear that it was the final straw for me. I came into 2020 with high hopes, and nine months in, I was ready to die. All that hard work felt like a waste. I felt like all I was getting was failure after failure. And I was so confident that night was my lucky night. My big break. But it all fell apart. I felt like a loser, not just in Real Estate but with people in general.

Do I really want to end it all? And would not smoking for periods and working for someone really be that bad?

Sailing away could be my new start. It's what my parents did when they first moved down to Florida. They bought a sailboat at first but ended up with a yacht. They named it "Moving On." When I first met them, my brother Boruch and I were living with my sisters at the Steins at the time. He and I were invited to stay with them for one weekend. Boruch and I had never been on a boat before, let alone a yacht. So when we first stepped abroad, it was like stepping into a new world.

I remember the first morning waking up on the yacht. Boruch and I decided to play Power Rangers in our two-foot wide, five-foot-long walkway between our beds. I don't remember much other than vague images of all of us hanging out almost like a family. We all hung out on the top deck. I also remember eating in the galley, which is the yacht's kitchen. It was a fun weekend.

Not too long after that, and sometime after the meeting with my school principal, I alone was invited to watch Forrest Gump with the middle-aged sailors in a movie theater. Little did I know I was on a test ride. But there was chemistry between us, and so sometime soon after, they decided to foster me.

I was taken out of the Stein's home. I moved away from all my siblings and moved in with David and his wife Fran on their yacht. I was scared that I would be eaten by sharks, but my new foster father assured me sharks were not going to eat me. He said that we live on the river, so if anything is going to eat me, it would be alligators.

I did not live a typical life in this new situation. I guess I never really did. While most kids were hanging with their friends, I was sanding down the yacht with my dad or working in the 120-degree heat engine room. I hated sanding, and I especially hated that engine room. I also hated that it was always so hot on the yacht. I remember yearning to live back on land. And after four years, we did. We moved into a house, and I lived there until my parents kicked me out at twenty.

Since then, I have learned how to ride the mad waves of existence. That's not to say I didn't have any guidance, but I had control over the steering wheel now. It has led me to this moment where choosing which course I take will determine what I will become. A drone, a corpse, or a god.

Working for someone else would make me a drone. Killing myself would make me a corpse. Taking my 401k and not waiting for me to be 99% corpse would make me a god.

When I look at it that way, death would be preferable to being a drone because someone else is living your life for you, which defeats the purpose of living in the first place. However, being a god would be preferable to death because death only has meaning when there is life.

And what do I enjoy most in life? Getting high and climbing mountains. An epiphany struck me like lightning as I descended out of this rabbit hole. What if the way back to Ouray was the way back to Ouray?!?

All this time, the answer was right in front of me! Why not share my experience with the world? I went to Ouray because I love getting high and climbing mountains. There has to be a way to bring my adventures from Ouray to the rest of the world. At this point, I have nothing to lose. I fucking hate real estate, and I never see myself being expendable for someone else's benefit again. Not until I at least give this a shot. I owe it to my parents to at least stay alive long enough to take care of them as they have done for me. If I'm forced to give up, the only reason why I will continue to live is to make sure that they live out the rest of their days happily. But I'm not there yet.

I finally had clarity on what I was meant to become. When I was younger, I thought that was with film-making. Then I realized the only way to get there was to have money. That meant I had to work for someone. Marriage tightened the pathway towards my goal, and I found myself trying to climb up the corporate ladder instead. But then life took a turn, and I found my way back on course.

My seven and a half years of hard work for the medical company allowed me to save money. It was almost as if everything happened to lead me to this decision. Do I continue to climb the corporate ladder elsewhere, or do I ascend the creator's ladder instead?

I wanted to be a creator. All I had to do was take the leap of faith in myself. Writing this book has made me realize that film was only a manifestation of something greater I yearned for. I knew I wanted to eventually share my story with other people and figured it was interesting enough to sell and make money on. But how much money would a book alone make, let alone from an unknown? And so, to compensate, I developed a new service called an interactive ebook adventure, where clients can go on a similar experience as portrayed in the book. I felt this was a unique idea that I should maintain control over. So I figured I would start my own publication. The Rabbit Hole Express. The concept quickly evolved into a life of its own.

I purchased an LLC under the name "THE RABBIT HOLE EXPRESS" and a domain name Therabbitholeexpress.com. I decided an RV would be the most convenient way to get around and establish my business. And so I bought one and named it "Moving On 2".

The idea started off simple. Getting high and climbing some mountains. I spent more time working on this project than I did with real estate after that night of the failed deals. It was as if I was at the end of a rabbit hole and finally being able to see what had been calling me this entire time.

It's my future self in my future world that my future self has created. I see and hear my future self calling me. As if in front of me, standing in the world that was inspired by my stays in Ouray. It was him who had been calling me this entire time. Well, I'm here, Chaim. I passed on the message to little Chaim like you wanted.

# Chapter 11: THE WAY BACK TO OURAY: DOWN A NEW RABBIT HOLE

The inside of my RV looked like it was almost created for someone my size. It was a relatively new model. 2018. Within a month of purchasing it, I moved out of my non-beach ghetto ass of a mistaken apartment and into my new home on wheels, situated on some guy's driveway. Towards the end of my stay there, he told me he is the owner of The Green Solution, a big dispensary chain in Colorado. He seemed interested in my ideas and even gave me the phone number of the person who manages all of the stores for him, but I think he may have given me the wrong number. I'm still waiting to hear back from him about that.

It feels like forever ago when he and I were burning all of his tree branches. I did it because I'm a pyromaniac, but he was doing it to clean up his yard. I don't think we have ever had a conversation that long before. But after that, we both became pretty friendly, even helping each other out with different things and hooking each other up with stuff. After living on his driveway for nearly four months, I finally hit the road to Colorado.

As scary as the transition was, I was confident. My future self has always been a seed inside of me. The dormant instructions switched my response to the cops at age five. Naturally, they opened me up to become what I was meant to become. A fucking beautiful flower.

It all makes sense now. Now I see myself as my future self. I see myself as the one who guided me on the journey to myself in Colorado. But it took quite a dig to reach my current self. The way back to Ouray was down a new rabbit hole. A rabbit hole that I dug.

**Ocala stop**

My first official campsite was on a lake in Ocala, Florida. Even though my truck got stuck in the mud when I first arrived, it was better than sleeping outside the Walmart the previous night. I had to listen to my loud generator running and the automated loudspeaker going off every ten seconds to remind customers to continue social distancing and wear masks.

The lake had a fantastic view, with a hillside covering most of its edges on the other side. We don't have hills in South Florida. We have bumps and made-made trash mountains.

When I was ready to leave, I started to get irritated with the back of my truck. It was nearly impossible to go back there and do things that I needed to do, and there was barely enough room for the generator to breathe. Unfortunately, the only solution was to get rid of my new bike.

I waited 3 months for that bike that I ordered through Amazon to come in from China, only to build the piece of crap myself and then pay a bike shop to fix China's mistake of a bike. It ended up being a pretty decent bike after the bike shop melded some stuff together that China should have done in the first place. It would have been even better to keep it to use in Colorado, but if I wanted to safely and conveniently get there, I had to leave the bike behind.

I really did and still do regret that decision. When I saw all the bikes going up and down the mountains in Colorado, I couldn't help but feel that I should have kept my bike and just put up with the back truck struggle.

But it's too late now. Got to keep moving on.

**There are mountains in Florida?**
I eventually reached a place called Quincy, which is deep west into the panhandle of Florida. I needed to stop for the night, and the next rest stop was coming up. It was the weirdest one I have ever seen. Usually, you can see the rest stops on the side of the road. This one took you down a winding back road for about a good 5 minutes uphill. After a good few minutes of driving, it didn't look like I would find a rest stop. I saw cars parked on the side of the road.

Should I do the same thing? Or is there something further along the road that is better? I kept on driving until I saw a cross bridge over the highway where I came from. It led past the other side of the road where there was clearly something. So I kept on going. After crossing the bridge, it hit me right then and there that I was on a mountain. I followed the rest of the road up to one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen in Florida. This was a mountain top. I have been lied to all my life.

Florida does have mountains.

**My shit blew off in Arkansas**
There is something beautiful about the simplicity of the middle states between Florida and Colorado. Sure it's not as mountainous as Colorado, but it's definitely not as flat as Florida. At least the majority of Florida. However, the deeper you go into the country, the fewer rest stops and gas stations you see.

I was driving through Arkansas, thinking I would stop somewhere in the northern part of the state. There was absolutely nowhere to stop, so I kept on going. Along the way on the highway, I heard a weird sound and saw some odd object fly in the wind between me and a truck going in the opposite direction. I just thought it was highway debris.

**Missouri Madness**

After finding a gas station deep in Missouri about 6 hours later or so, I realized that my outside refrigeration cover blew off on the highway in Arkansas. My RV emergency brake line got squished in between some metal and subsequently pulled out the emergency plug, forcing me to stay at the gas station for the night. My tire brakes buckled up and barely allowed me to move several feet out of the way.

My dad was the sound of calmness and reasoning for me. I adopted his mentality, settled down, and went to sleep for the night. I woke up with a clear head and a calmness that allowed me to get my shit together and hit the road.

It's been almost two weeks since I smoked pot and about a week since I've had a cup of coffee. I felt like a different person in a different world. It almost felt surreal. But it wasn't just a sober mind. It was everything that I have experienced since I left Florida up until now. I didn't feel the need to have coffee or marijuana, but at the same time, I felt off. Like the higher forms of myself were disconnected.

Is there not one rest stop or RV place between Arkansas and Missouri? I'm not kidding. I drove over 10 hours and couldn't find a single place to stop. And I learned that RVs are not meant to be operated for that long. I wasn't planning on driving for over 10 hours. My goal was only to do 3 to 5 hours a day. But Arkansas and Missouri forced me to continue.

Somewhere in my RV was leaking and created wood expansion and destruction under my bathroom sink. Many screws became loose and were sitting on top of the screen above the ventilation portal in my bathroom. I was scared that if I didn't take care of that sooner than later, that too would have flown off. Several other screws throughout the rest of the RV loosened due to the driving vibration. And it just seemed like the problems continued to stock up after that.

I finally found an RV place deep in Missouri that screamed salvation. I followed the signs to get there. And then, as soon as I was about to turn in, my RV brakes locked again. I took out the device that lifts up vehicles so you can change tires and used it to lift up the towing bars to get the emergency line brake unstuck. Eventually, with the help of another trucker, I was able to get it unstuck and drive it into the RV place.

And then finally, when I was situated, a thunderstorm came in. Luckily I taped up the outside refrigeration system. That helped to protect it from nature.

After two days, the Sun was out, but I was racing against time before another storm would come and get me stuck in the dirt with my truck that only had power in the front wheels. I know I should have gotten a four-wheel drive, but I couldn't afford one. I got out of Missouri anyways.

**Back in Kansas, please don't handcuff me again**

My original plans were to come in the way that I came in last time through the southern border, up through Texas, across through New Mexico, and then up the butt hole of Colorado. However, due to circumstances and the fact that there was a shorter route, I went on an unpredictable journey driving on an unknown path that led me back to Kansas. I drove very carefully. I had nothing but complete focus on my driving.

I finally hit a rest stop for the night in Park, Kansas. It was freezing cold. The weather app said it would snow very early in the morning, so I didn't hesitate (even with the lack of sleep) to leave before the snow showed up.

I hit the road again, and I couldn't get to Denver sooner. I wish I could get there sooner than the five hours the GPS says it will take.

**Denver on my mind**

I had an appointment set at an RV repair shop in Denver. I was lucky that I got up early that morning and beat the snow in Kansas. I did not want to get stuck in that.

As I was driving to Colorado to go to the RV repair shop, my parents called me to ask if I had heard about the snowstorm predicted to hit Denver? I didn't even think to look at the weather. I just assumed it was going to be okay. He told me it's supposed to be the worst snowstorm Colorado has ever been through.

I finally arrived at the RV repair shop. We started to chit-chat, and one of them asked where I was headed. I told them I was going up to Black Hawk. They warned me that the area is supposed to get hit the worst and always gets hit the worst. They added that there is a good chance there's already a foot of snow.

It hadn't even started to snow yet in Denver, but they weren't kidding. It took two hours to get my RV up that mountain to the tippy-top. Upon arrival, there literally was a foot of snow everywhere. I had to get my RV towed into a spot that wasn't mine because my site was too icy.

**Survival mode**

I've seen snow before. I've never been through the fourth-worst storm in a States history before. Because of the storm's severity, they didn't allow for any water or sewage hookups. When the storm came hitting down worse than any hurricane I've ever been through, it seemed like I would have to be melting snow pretty soon to survive. The wind was not only powerful but painful. Within a day, the snow was already up to my hips. The RVs that were up there the day before were all gone. It seemed like I was the only one left on top of the mountain.

I tried reaching out to the maintenance guy who helped tow my vehicles into the spot, but he never got back to me. At that point, it seemed like my only choice left was to melt snow. So I did. It took a few hours, but I made enough to go to the bathroom, wash my hands, and brush my teeth.

My dad told me you can drink snow water, but after melting it in the microwave, you may think twice before drinking it when you see what floats in there. That's what I did. I ended up rationing the half liter of water that I had left.

Monday morning came. I got out of bed to the sound of silence. Did the storm finally subside? I open my kitchen blinds to see a colorful sky welcoming the Sun for the first time in what seemed like forever. I've been stuck inside all weekend. The only times I went out were to gather up some snow or to change my propane tank. I tried to start my truck once, but it was hidden under a snow hill, and I could barely get past my front door.

I put on all three layers of clothing and jumped into my boots. I unlocked the RV front door and slowly opened it, realizing I didn't have to be as careful because no wind would blow it away from me anymore. I looked down at the snow-filled RV steps camouflaged. It must be at least a couple feet on each step. I then looked back up again. At that moment, I felt like I was stepping out into an alien world. I took my first step. It was a mighty step that made me feel like Neil Armstrong did when he took his first step down the ladder. And then, finally, the first step onto the snow-filled ground. All I had to do was dig through the snow to get to the convenience store.

I finally got inside. It turns out the convenience store was open all weekend. I wish I had known that. I would have just dug my way through the snow to grab some drinking water and more food. Although the snow ended up being about 5 feet tall in some areas and the wind as strong as a hurricane, I still needed stuff from the store and would have swam if I was forced to. To be fair, I did call, but no one picked up, so I just assumed they took off for a snow day. I'm from Florida. The least they could have done was excuse my ignorance. They didn't and were rude about getting my RV out of that spot and into the other one intended for me. Apparently, the maintenance guy wasn't supposed to put me in the that he put me in. But all my tires, including the RV, were frozen to the ground. And it was all covered in four to five feet of snow, so there is no way a two-wheeler will be able to pull 7000 lb on slippery ice and hills of snow.

I think that may have been why he didn't pick up. Because he tried to help me out and got yelled at by his boss. When I was in the laundry room, he made it known that he got in trouble for that and that up there, people do everything themselves, and no one asks for favors.

He gave me his business card and told me to call him if I had any other troubles. I did just that. I called to see if the store was open. The least he could have done was respond back and say yes. It wasn't much of a favor to ask other than to get a response back.

We still weren't allowed to hook up to water and sewage. And apparently, we weren't able to dump our sewage in the Outhouse toilets. I know this because the manager threatened my future stay there if I were to do that again. I'm not complaining, but I saw a guy do it the next day because his wife was in a wheelchair. I understand that is an entirely different circumstance, but the people there didn't seem friendly. They could have treated me differently.

I was forced to use the outhouse for showering and the bathroom. It was connected to the convenience store, the office, and the laundry room. Amazing. Everything that I needed to do was done in that one building. So when another snowstorm hit a couple days later, I had to dig my way through the snow to get to the convenience store/office/laundry room/outhouse. How convenient.

The worst part was every time I needed to take a shit, I had to put on three layers of clothes, a hat, gloves, and boots. By the time I got out the door, nearly ten minutes had passed every time. The journey through the blistering snow caused vasoconstriction and diverted blood flow to more vital organs. By the time I would get to the outhouse and sit on the toilet, my body would say, "SIKE, BIIIIIIIIITCH! Just kidding. I don't have to take a shit! Fuck you!" I was lucky if a tenth of what I ate came out.

And to top it off, everything from hand moisturizer (which clearly is a necessity in this part of the world) to the food was triple the price because of how secluded a location it was. This convenience store conveniently became the center of my existence, including being the site of inspiration for The Cosmic Mind Hunt and the rest of my business. It all started when I could finally take a good shit on the toilet in the outhouse.

It started when I woke up that morning realizing I would be stuck on this mountain for longer than I would like to be. I was lucky to finally chip away at all the ice around my tires and get off that mountain twice to Denver. But after that, I became a prisoner again on top of that mountain for the next two weeks.

In my imprisonment, I found my freedom. Time became an essential factor in the madness behind my inspiration. I made a live Facebook video about the snow and how it's affected my perspective on things. It led me to a thought experiment that I learned from Neil deGrasse Tyson. A Facebook friend watching the video asked me to clarify my statement. I mentioned that we are walking contradictions and that while we do have free will, at the same time, we don't. He replied that what I said was a contradiction. I replied, "that is the whole point. Everything is a contradiction, and that is the only way to understand reality".

There is a focal point between both contradictions where things become clear. I tried using Neil deGrasse Tyson's thought experiment to reach a place that would reveal reality's conflict. I failed to be able to put it into words on live TV.

I ended the video because I had to take a shit. A Eureka moment struck as I was starting to have some sort of proper shitting happen. My whole life has led up to this moment on the toilet that would define the man I am supposed to become. I am supposed to entertain the climb to higher realities, and I am supposed to build the way to get there.

The whole reason why I love climbing is that the higher up I go, the more I see below. This is a significant reason why I love Ouray so much. The mountains there allowed me to see so much below. And now, I found a way to bring my psychedelic experiences in Ouray to the rest of the world.

**Passover miracle**

I got the news that the two-week snowstorm was finally going to pass over for the first two days of Passover. It almost felt like something or someone wanted me to get the fuck off that mountain then and there. I knew that I didn't know what was behind the mechanics of my rabbit holes. But, everything in front of it seemed to be playing out in a way that would suggest the possibility of it being part of some bigger scheme.

It was almost as if some higher power wanted me to be stuck on that mountain so I would have the freedom to come up with the Cosmic Mind Hunt. And when I completed it, it was almost as if the clouds parted for me so I could come down from the mountain and share a "perspective-changer" (as MysterE would later call it) with the rest of the world.

Like always, I was running against the clock. After the first two days of Passover (which were the most important days of Passover), another snowstorm was predicted to hit. If I wanted to get off that mountain and not be stuck there another month, I needed to put in all my effort at chipping away at all that ice. I needed to hammer away at the field underneath the RV, shoveling the snow and revving the engine to break the ice up. During those six hours, I contemplated my second trip to Colorado. My tires were frozen to the ground. How I reacted then versus how I reacted this time was completely different.

I was leaving earlier than I paid for, but this was the only day to get off the mountain. The next day would have trapped me again. So I just moved on. The Rabbit Hole Express was ready to be built.

**Black Hawk to Golden**

My idea was at a fork in the road. Do I apply it to Ganja Therapy (a service I developed in Florida while living on that guy's driveway)? Do I create a separate program with it and call it Space-Time Meditation, or do I apply it to both? At this point, I haven't even thought of the Cosmic Mind Hunt yet. I just had the stepping stones for it. And now that I was able to get off the mountain after chipping away for 6 hours while having the power of the Sun shine down and help, I am on my way down from Black Hawk to the city of Golden.

**Golden at Golden**
The city of Golden was my most golden experience so far since I left Florida in my RV. Besides having a reasonable price for the area and a fixed electricity bill, the move-in was relatively easy. The hookups were set up quickly. Unlike Black Hawk, where I was literally living on a slope and constantly working against gravity, I was on even ground, and my brain could also feel the difference.

Instead of being on the tippy top of a mountain, I was at the foot of many mountains. It was down here, back where society was, that most of the development for my business occurred.

**The Cosmic Mind Hunt**
About a minute from my new fantastic campsite was a Home Depot. I went there two to four times a day, mixing and matching different pipes and wood pieces. I was zoned into the vision I had for The Rabbit Hole Express. The ideas just kept pouring in nonstop. It was cosmic.

I felt like an actual artist. I felt the power of creativity like I'd never felt before. This was a version of me I never knew existed. And now it's just coming out. Now it's manifesting as destiny. I see everything. I perceive the world I want to live in, and I decided to create it.

I envisioned an entire universe bounded by two dimensions, suspended by a three-dimensional cube. The concept was based on the thought experiment mentioned in chapter 6. In The Cosmic Mind Hunt, I created three phrases:

Phase one is the mental experiment. We envision ourselves as a dimensionless dot. A point of no measurement, of no value, of no definition, of no meaning. But because we yearn to be something, we decide to envision ourselves as a separate dot. The line drawn between both dots gives us the first measurement. Then multiplying those dots parallel, we climb to the second dimension, a square made of four-line sides. From there, we climb further to a six-square-sided cube. Finally, we reach the fourth dimension by ascending from the six square-sided cube to the eight cube-sided tesseract suspended in five measurements.

I was able to make this a relatable application through the concept of flipping through a stack of papers with a similar drawing on each but with slightly different positions. And that's where phase 2 comes into play. People who do the Cosmic Mind Hunt then have to hunt for what I named Cosmic Mystery Fragments. They contain riddles attached to them to help them get to phase 3, building the cosmic mystery device. Upon completion, the greatest secret in the Universe is revealed. You.

**Ganja Gorilla**

While creating this world, I honed in on the lessons I learned throughout my years. That included the teachings of using my mistakes to better the overall objective. In my experience, the unintentional usually ends up being better than what was intended. If you work with it, you can calibrate it in the direction you want. It's what man has always done. It's why we have planes in the sky. I simply am doing what man was meant to do: turn dreams into reality. To walk the fine line between imagination and the physical world.

And that's how I created Ganja Gorilla. I was trying to take apart The Cosmic Mind Hunt cube when I unintentionally dropped a part of it and discovered the applications of what I'm doing are endless.

Within a short time, I created it. The idea was to compete with others to get your Ganja Gorilla across the jungle gym. Each move is made by whoever can hold a puff of ganja the longest. Competitors can try to take shortcuts, and if need be, you can throw them in jail to thwart their "monkey schemes ."The winner who gets their ganja gorilla across the jungle gym wins!

As new ideas like this kept coming along, I decided to start reaching out for a venue. I wanted to reach out to different Airbnbs, lounges, dispensaries, bud and breakfasts, and private landowners. The first people that I reached out to were a lounge and an Airbnb host that I recently researched. I sent a charming letter:

As soon as I sent it, I began to think about its permissibility. I decided to read the rules on Airbnb, and lo and behold, they didn't allow it.

The good news is that as soon as you purchase a stay, they give you all the contact information to the owners of Airbnb. MysterE came to mind, and this was fair game.

I told myself I would never go back there for reasons mentioned in Chapter 7. Am I using a narrative to prevent me from jumping on board a potential opportunity? It sure seems like I was. Writing this book was meant to help free me from my mental shackles, not create new ones. So I reached out to MysterE.

**A house with history**

I remember working on a revision for chapter 7 not too long ago. Hidden memories were starting to surface, and I was able to further evaluate chapter 7. I came to the conclusion that just like me, Robin Stein, my biological parents, my adopted parents, and every single human being on this planet, we all are humans. Even the seemingly hard amongst us are just trying to make sense of the world around them. Given enough time, you learn a thing or two about it.

Like myself, he didn't blossom into the creator he is today until around my age, when he came out of his shell.

He ended up at the River House with nothing but a simple idea. To share his soul through his artwork. It grew into a life all on its own, and some might even say it's a magical place. I wouldn't argue with them. There is something special about the area. It's the reason why he and I connect. Like myself, he is a creator. A man who yearns for new values on new tables. Albeit a bit different from my own, I respect his passion for his beliefs. It's what guided him to his beautiful creations. It's what spoke to a deeper level of me that I have never experienced with anyone else.

I decided to listen to my own advice from chapter 7 and gave him a call. A couple minutes later, he called me back and left a message about being interested in having me come over to his farm to discuss my ideas with him.

It was a beautiful half-hour drive to Boulder from Golden. It was a bit cloudy and misty out, but it gave the place a nice overtone. I noticed the labyrinth to my right and the beautiful mountains right behind it as I was pulling in. I drove past the second gate and saw the new artwork from MysterE. It looked like a fort and a grounded tree house all in one. From the outside, it seemed like stepping inside would give the feeling of a cloaking device almost.

I passed it and went through the walkway where the river was visible. Something was different about it. Something was different about the whole place. I couldn't put my finger on it just yet, but something felt missing. I knocked on the front door, and someone who looked a lot like Miranda opened it. For a second, I wanted to say, "Hi Miranda, it's so nice to see you again!" But something was telling me this wasn't her and that she did look a lot younger.

I was right. Her name was Jade. I didn't remember her name after she told me initially. I didn't even remember the second time she told me later on a week and a half later on a Saturday at a party for all of MysterE's musical friends. I didn't even remember her name the third, fourth, and possibly even the fifth time she told me her name. But before I left that first party, when I smoked her and a few other people out one last time, I remembered her name and said, "see? I told you I would learn it eventually!"

Ironically, I learned the little puppy Russell's name quicker than I could hers. Weird.

Before ever going to that party, my first time back to the River House was to get reacquainted with MysterE. When she opened the door, I asked her where I could find him, and she told me that he was in the yoga studio finishing up some work. I asked her, "would I be disturbing him if I went in there?" She smiled at me and then said, "you would be fine if you went in there to talk with him."

She pointed to a door in a building right across from the house and said it was the door to the right where he most likely was. I walked over and looked inside. I remember only seeing a young guy without his shoes. I opened the door, walked inside, and in the corner, with a paintbrush in his hand, was MysterE, knelt down and painting fractal art on the wall. In a calm voice, he told me to give him a minute and take my shoes off. When I started to do so, he finished painting and said, "there's no sense in taking them off now. I'm done. Let's go talk in my fort."

I forgot what he called it. I'm almost sure he didn't call it a fort, but that's the only word that I can sum up that best describes it. It didn't feel like a fort, especially not from the inside. It felt more like that pocket from my first acid trip in Ouray, where I met other versions of myself. It was in there that we talked about everything in the Universe.

We must have been there for a good three hours just reminiscing on everything from the past to the future. It turns out something was missing. At first, I thought it may have been the mad art design over the river, but it was Miranda. Since this is not MysterE's story, I'm not going to get into the details. I'll let him do that if he feels comfortable telling anyone else. But what I will say is that she was a kindred soul that will be missed.

We also discussed some of my ideas. MysterE liked them, and he wanted to nurture them. He, too, was going through a transition, and he opened up about that to me as well. Winter was ending, the pandemic was starting to get under control, and he wanted to try something new. He said he believes what I'm trying to do may be the very thing he has been looking for. So he decided to take on my project and allow me to hone my skills on his farm.

Before I finally got to test out The Cosmic Mind Hunt, MysterE invited me to a party. Yep. That party I mentioned earlier where all of his musical friends came to enjoy each other's company all weekend. We were initially supposed to meet up again for a second time earlier that week on a Monday. However, he pushed it off to a Wednesday, then again to a Friday, only to have him push it off again until the following week.

I really did wish to meet up with him sooner than later, mainly since the Coffee Joint lounge and the Mexican restaurant venues fell apart. At that point, he was the only venue left, albeit the most practical, the most beautiful, and the most meaningful. I knew there were other ways. Just ways that were not as official as having a venue.

I met a bunch of interesting characters at that party. The one that stands out the most was a Persian fellow who played numerous instruments that you don't usually see being played, such as some Native American flutes. His name was Masood. He was there with his wife, Dina, a musician as well.

I met her first, but I learned his name quicker than hers. We had an interesting musical session together after the group musical session. She enjoyed my beatboxing and asked me to rap one of her poems while playing her unique guitar. I told her, "that's my brother's department, but I'll try." I was impressed with myself the first time around. She didn't record it and wanted to do it again to capture it on audio. I told her I didn't think I could reproduce that again, and sure enough, I was right. It really wasn't that good the second time around. So we tried again, and even though it was different from the first, it was good in its own right, including the part where I zoned out on a beatbox.

There were people there from ages 21 to 65. Somehow, many people I don't remember meeting knew my name and even talked about me or to me as if they knew me. I must have left a good impression earlier on in the day because I don't remember those people.

It was starting to get a little dark out, and I felt very uncomfortable while everyone else was eating. I knew MysterE invited me for the afternoon, but I felt like he did so only out of pity. So I decided it was time to leave. I wanted to say goodbye to him first. He asked me if I was going. I danced around the subject a little until he said I was welcome to stay and have some chili and everything. So I did. I mixed in a little bit of the side stuff, including guacamole, sour cream, and cheddar cheese. I walked around and did a little schmoozing.

And then Jade came out and invited everyone to do some type of ceremony in what she called a "yurt." I told her I had never heard of a yurt before. She responded that's a perfect reason to come and try it out. So I did.

I knew it would be some Hippie thing, and sure enough, it was, but I was interested. I like trying out new things, especially things that are unique. It was inspiring. So much so that when he finally did have me come over for a demonstration and scheduling the following week, I used it for the first phase of The Cosmic Mind Hunt trial. At the end of the meditation ceremony, I said the quiet part out loud: "Now I know where I've seen this! I've seen it in movies!" It was funny, however, and Jade laughed too.

At the end of the night, I smoked out Jade, Masood, and a few others. We were talking about some philosophical concepts, including spirituality. When I told him about Ganja Gorilla, he said that marijuana should only be used for spiritual growth and not for fun. It's funny that he said that because those exact words came out of MysterE's mouth when I talked about Ganja Gorilla earlier on in the day. My response to Masood was that entertainment and spirituality go hand-in-hand. You know you are growing spiritually if you are entertained by what you're doing. I told Masood that my spiritual growth has been very entertaining. He smiled and said that he admired my perspective on spirituality.

After the bowl was done, I said goodbye to MysterE. We made a plan to do a demonstration of The Cosmic Mind Hunt and talk about scheduling on the coming Tuesday. We hugged, and then I left back to Golden.

Tuesday came. I got the okay to stop by at 1 p.m. Jade was still there, and two handsome guys her age. I couldn't help but smile when I first met one of them. Not that I ever wanted to stick my dick in him or anything, but from a non-sexual point of view, hot diggity damn, this guy is hot! I put my appreciation for his perfect symmetry, blue eyes, and perfect blond wavy hair aside and introduced myself.

He was only going to be there for a couple weeks with a friend he was on the road with from Tennessee. Both of them, Jade and MysterE, decided to be part of the very first trial of The Cosmic Mind Hunt.

I hid Cosmic Mystery Fragments inside the Labyrinth first. It was like worlds were colliding at that moment. Both mine and MysterE's.

After I hid all the pieces, we all met inside the yurt, where I introduced The Cosmic Mind Hunt and the philosophy behind The Rabbit Hole Express. I began the mental experiment and took everyone on a journey through higher dimensions to change their perspective. Like the first time I tried out Space-Time Meditation on Facebook live, I also got good feedback on this. Despite some constructive criticism, MysterE seemed impressed and even called it a "perception-changer."

I wasn't done there. The ideas just kept on coming. Even Ganja therapy found its form through an actual cube made of plexiglass and reflecting color lights. I ended up calling it "The Hot Box" and using the prototype for Ganja Therapy.

New people were jumping on board The Rabbit Hole Express, including DJs for the pot parties. I created something that has never been done before, which has given me an acquired skill set no matter where I live. It's something that I will have for the rest of my life now.

My life's work was starting to get recognized. The first major event for The Rabbit Hole Express showed that people were interested enough to pay money for it. That means I have a future. I found a way to share my experiences in Ouray with the world.

I didn't forget about Ouray. I lived less than five and a half hours away from it now. I booked a two-night stay dead smack in the middle of the best season to go there. A bit more expensive, but I've wanted to see Ouray at least once when the flowers are out in full bloom. It's why Colorado has its name, and it's the peak of the state's pride, which you can feel pulsate as soon as you reach it. Ouray is the most beautiful expression of Colorado. Now that I am here as the fully bloomed flower who followed its natural instructions, it's time to make the call.

I was on my final hike of the trip. The Lower Cascade Falls to the Upper Cascade Falls was the dialing to little Chaim. Since I started coming here to Ouray, I have only hiked to Lower Cascade Falls. I didn't even know that the Upper Cascade Falls existed until this trip. Symbolically, this is the key to my upper self. So I climbed. Like MysterE's Labyrinth, instead of caving in to fear, I kept moving up that mountain and crossing those death traps. I started the journey later than I wanted to, but I made it up there right on time by pure coincidence for the high holiday of 4:20p.m. As if I were in the right place at the right time. When I recognized that I had reached my destination, little Chaim picked up.

To life.